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RUSSIA FROM WITHIN

BY

ALEXANDER ULAR

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1905

Authorised Translation

PREFACE

THESE pages will come as a shock to some very sincere friends of Russia. Those who confound the Russian Nation with the Bureaucratic System by which she is governed, will be inclined to dispute a number of apparently improbable facts which I have cited in order to bring out the character of Contemporary Tsardom. It is my duty to put them on their guard against such generous impulses. This book is not a pamphlet, but an account of the general conditions prevailing at the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. In these, the personal action of the Executive—Tsar, Princes, Ministers, and Generals—is the capital factor. Analysis of this Executive was, therefore, incumbent on me, by juxtaposition of the most typical facts relating to its action. The facts do not make pretty reading. But they are authentic, historical, exact. And it is facts alone that are of importance. The personages themselves are uninteresting, and I regard them merely as the casual actors of a historic part. From this standpoint, therefore, I discuss them freely, solely in view of the accuracy of the picture I have drawn of contemporary Russian politics.

In this picture there is no scope for predictions of the

issues of the Revolutionary Crisis. I have confined myself to the explanation of current events by exposing the sources in which they originated. I make no comments. My aim is only to give those who have not had opportunity of studying the internal machinery of Russian Political Life a statement of facts, by which they may interpret and judge the disturbances of the present Movement, whence we may be sure that a Free Russia will emerge.

ALEXANDER ULAR.

May, 1905.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE . . . . . .

THE ASSASSINATION OF PLEHVE, AND THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE REVOLUTION 1

CHAPTER I.

THE DYNASTY AND THE COURT 20
Peter III. and Paul I. 23
Alexander I. 24
Nicholas I. 25
Alexander II. 27
Alexander III. 29
The Psychology of Nicholas II. 36
The Influence of the Empresses 39
Occult Influences 42
The Government of Nicholas II. 48
Subservience of Nicholas II. 50
Nicholas the Megalomaniac 55
The Reign of Terror 59
Nicholas II. and the Malversation of Funds . . . 63
The Irresponsible Autocrat 69
The Grand Dukes 71
Leaders of Rank and File 73
Serge 75
Vladimir 82
Alexis 96
Alexander Mikhailovitch 97
Nicholas Nicholaievitch 98
The Pillars of Tsardom 99

CHAPTER II.

PAGE
ADVENT OF THE BUREAUCRACY 101
Decline of the Aristocracy 103
Bureaucratic Principles 105
The Oligarchy 106
The Moscow Group 107
The Masters of Alexander III. 109
Pobiedonostseff 110
Plehve 112
Muravieff 114
Plehve's Privy Papers 115
The Creation of Anti-Semitism 117
Plehve the Conspirator 120
Constitution of the Oligarchical Group 123
Court, Army, and Police 127

CHAPTER III.

WITTE'S *RÉGIME* 133
The Economic Upheaval 138
The Screw—Always the Screw 140
Taxes and Misery 148
Decay of Industry 151
Monetary Reforms 155
Agricultural Distress 157
Impoverishment 159
An Exhausted Nation 165
Motives Underlying Fiscal Oppression 167
Policy of Expansion 169
The Russo-Chinese Empire 173
Intervention of the Oligarchy 175
Triumph of Reaction 178
Plehve as Dictator 180
The Provocation to War 187
The *Impasse* 190

CHAPTER IV.

PAGE

THE NATIONAL AWAKENING 194

Bureaucratic Nationalism 197
The Finlanders 200
The Poles 206
Germans of the Baltic Provinces, Esthonians, Livonians, Letts, Lithuanians, White Russians 213
Georgians, Armenians, Tribes of the Caucasus . . 214
The Ruthenians 218
The Jews 223
The Anti-Semitism of the Government 227
The Jewish Revolution 235
The Moral Crisis 237
The Legal Arbitrament 241
Transformation of the Laws 244
Judicial Prevarication 249
The General Corruption 254
The Army of Thieves and Traitors 257
The Social Crisis 260
The Peasants 267
The Intellectual Crisis 277
The Revolution 288

RUSSIA FROM WITHIN

RUSSIA FROM WITHIN

THE ASSASSINATION OF PLEHVE, AND THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE REVOLUTION

A NEW Era is dawning upon Russia. The halo of Omnipotence, which for more than a century has made Tsardom the object of admiration to Princes, of execration to their Peoples, is waning. Materially and morally the Russian Autocracy is in a state of senile decay, which must inevitably terminate in death. It has outlived itself. During a period of nearly thirty years, a process of internal decomposition has destroyed the greater part of the vital energy, and even the rigid structure, of that political organisation which the world believed the most stable and most powerful in existence. Throughout this period of corruption, the most civilised nations, the most subtle diplomatists, the most astute financiers, have been prostrating themselves before the worm-eaten throne of the Tsars.

By a sad irony of fate, the prestige of the Muscovite Autocracy has increased beyond the Russian Frontier, in proportion to the decline of its internal forces. The growing influence of the Tsar in the affairs of other nations was conditioned by the same causes as the decline of the Tsarian System within the confines of

Russia. The fatally victorious war with Turkey falsified alike the internal and external situation of Tsardom. His victories made the Tsar the arbiter of peace and war in Europe. His brilliant display of military power dazzled a world that was still enthralled by Bismarck's colossal successes. A possible counterpoise to the disquieting ambitions of the rising German Empire had been sought in all directions. And it was a real relief to insist on the glorious strength of Russia. Her friendship was eagerly solicited; and the Tsars were shrewd enough to demand the highest price in order to spread the external glamour of their strength still further. An enormous supply of capital flowed in. It was utilised for new military prowess; expansion across the Asiatic deserts was initiated. And while the political world, blinded by so much audacity, applauded the irresistible deluge or trembled at it, Russia succeeded in capturing even the advanced intellects by the creation of vast factitious industries that were designed to give the Empire the prestige of a modern State. The façade of Tsardom confronted a dazzled Europe. "It is from the North that the Light now comes to us," chanted the hypnotised poets. And those who had the "morbid" curiosity to investigate the foundations of all this splendour, and who on the farther side of the Russian frontier discovered no radiant focus, but only a colossal organism inert and putrefying, were labelled fools or imbeciles.

The Tsar's fatal victory over the Sultan, nevertheless, carried stagnation into the bowels of the Russian Colossus. After the disaster of Sevastopol, the life of the Russian Nation moved in a lamentably vicious circle. Exactly fifty years elapsed between the two dates most fatal to the dream of the universal supremacy

of Tsardom. Sevastopol was the symbol of Russian aspirations in the East; Port Arthur incarnated the idea of Russian preponderance in the Far East. The fall of these two main ramparts of the Tsar's power marks the alpha and omega of an epoch in which Tsardom evolved through a period of external splendour from one disaster to another, while the Russian Nation, or, to speak more exactly the congeries of nations subject to Muscovite Autocracy, progressed from hopes that were too quickly falsified, through a hell of oppression and suffering, to a new hope, more luminous and more rational. If this half-century, which is unique in history, be divided into two portions as nearly as possible equal, two essentially contradictory periods will be marked out. The first, which extends from the defeat of the Crimea to the victory of Plevna, exhibits the beneficent consequences to the Nation of its masters' distress. The Crimean War had inaugurated an abyss of desolation: the Russian Empire appeared rotten to the core, even to its own rulers. And it was a question of life or death to them to regenerate the bases of their apparent strength, by means of a total transformation of the moral conditions in which the people were living—or vegetating. This was the era of the "great reforms of the sixties," which illustrated the reign of Alexander II. A revivifying breath passed over the country, which seemed to be on the verge of awakening from a secular nightmare. The productive classes of the Nation, the commons and the peasants, were raised from the condition of cattle to the dignity of human beings. Serfdom was abolished. The nobles, who jealously guarded the appalling prerogatives of the Mongol *condottieri* who were their ancestors, were constrained to efface the line of demarcation that till then had separated them from the

human cattle they governed. Russia became almost a European country.

But a system such as Tsardom—a system in which the arbitrary executive of the Monarch is imitated by everyone who possesses a fraction of official authority, a system in which the Government machine works only to enhance the external notoriety of its Chief—can only exist where the oppressed people are resigned to play the part of mere brute material indefinitely. This was now at an end. Favours had been conferred, with the announcement that the people were raised to the dignity of a Nation. They had been enfranchised—on paper—but were provided with no means of enjoying their privileges. They had been authorised, encouraged even, to feel themselves a united mass of conscious human beings. What wonder then that these hordes of beasts of burden, suddenly converted by the grace of the Tsar into a human crowd, should in their sudden felicity have realised themselves Men, and discovered that the favours granted were in reality only a right—rather an infinitesimal fraction of the rights—of Man, which every self-conscious individual must regard as his natural and inalienable appanage? But the moment the Nation regarded as its rights what the distorted brain of a degenerate Sovereign had imagined he might offer as a gracious gift, the relations between People and Autocrat were bound to suffer a radical alteration. The Tsar-Autocrat, who admits but one right within his Empire, his own personal initiative, was henceforward compelled to look on the bulk of his people as virtual Revolutionaries. And the Nation, perceiving that its Masters never would admit as human rights the favours that had been flung to it, could only see in Tsardom an inimical, tyrannical system.

Thus it came about that the very reforms of Alexander II. contained the germs of fresh dissensions between the people and the autocracy. The infatuated Tsar revoked as many of his "favours" and reforms as possible. The disappointed people thenceforward defended as their right what the Autocrat regarded as charity. The result was a sinister and ominous fight between the despot, repenting him of his liberalism, and those who voiced the claims of the people. This was the first grand era of Nihilism. The Russo-Turkish War presented itself as an admirable diversion from the internal maladies of the nation. It was unfortunately victorious. The glare of success blinded the masses themselves for the moment. The Tsar had conquered: Tsarism triumphed within as well as without. More presumptuous than ever he had dared to be before, the Autocrat insisted on the gracious character of all his concessions. He elevated himself grotesquely on a superhuman pedestal. He no longer admitted any criticism, any appearance of human dignity. His principle was "Down with the wretches!"—the "wretch" being the man who was conscious of his natural rights. He even went so far as to reject on principle, for fear of diminishing his authority, the appeals of the poor fools who were speaking in defence of Tsardom. What the Tsarian *régime* does is well, was the motto of the Autocracy. He that criticises no matter what act of Tsardom is a criminal, that of the Administration. The former dictum at once became the cloak for the most monstrous abuses on the part of the State officials: peculation was overtly carried on to an incredible degree; refusal of justice was an act of virtue; the most barefaced exploitation of the defenceless subject by the irresponsible functionary characterised this *régime*, the

outcome of the Russian victory. The audacious malefactors who still clamoured for justice, even in the most trivial matters—those who appealed on any occasion to "this impious hallucination of universal rights," as said the insane Alexander II.—were rebels, "nihilists," so-called, perhaps, because they were unable to obtain one jot of all that constitutes the minimum of necessary rights to the self-conscious individual.

It was thus that the victory over Turkey inaugurated that internal moral decadence in Russia which ensued on the passing impetus given by the Crimean defeat. During the twenty-five years that elapsed between Plevna and Port Arthur, the shadows have unceasingly deepened. The insolence of Tsardom has grown with the infatuation of the foreigners who burned incense before it. The Russian nation has again been subjugated imperceptibly, but with growing pace, to a *régime*, the only parallel to which is provided by the closing epoch of the Byzantine Empire. Equally imperceptibly, but with fatal certainty, has Tsardom prepared the expiatory catastrophe which will engulf it. Its *quondam* "favours" have endowed the People with an ineradicable consciousness of their dignity; have provided them with the means of comparing themselves with civilised nations: and even if the three caricatures of Autocrats who, for twenty-five years, have sullied the Throne of this vastest of Empires by their moral degeneracy have succeeded, by their terrorism, perjury, lies, theft, assassination and duplicity, in hoodwinking modern humanity, in gagging their victims, in ridiculing all noble aspiration, and in concealing innumerable crimes, perversions, the immorality of their *entourage*, and the corruption that putrefies everything they touch, beneath the cloak of their Imperial dignity, there is at least one

thing they have been unable to infect—and that is the native good sense of the masses. This supreme faculty of even those to whom all healthy mental pabulum is refused, who are stuffed with superstitions, lies, and vain promises, has enabled the Russian Nation in the last twenty-five years to feel the whole ignominy of the Tsardom that oppresses them with ever-increasing weight. No human being can support a burden whose weight is for ever increasing: there comes a breaking-point at which he gives way; or else his crushed vitality explodes in some final spasm, sets him on his feet by an exercise of superhuman force, and shakes off the insufferable load.

This moment has arrived for the Russian Nation. It remained in apathy to the ultimate moment: it saw and felt the increment of the criminal burdens which its tyrants imposed at their own pleasure. Resentment, bitter rage, contempt, hatred, battened galore on the abominable sins that were committed. The soul of the People, the soul of the victims collectively, was filled with anguish. Twenty-five years of accumulated suffering were brought to birth by one supreme effort, so soon as the controlling nerve of Hope was stimulated.

July 28, 1904, was the historic date at which this hope was quickened. The explosion of the Terrorist bomb beneath the iron-plated carriage of the Minister of the Interior, von Plehve, must be regarded as the initial point of the Russian Revolution. The history of the Western World presents no other example of an attempt whose effects have been so immediate and so big with result, as the sudden suppression of this man. But this effect is easily explicable. Plehve was not merely the chief representative, but the actual incarnation, of the *régime* which brought the Autocracy from Plevna to Port Arthur, and the Nation from "liberty by favour" to

ferocious slavery. There can be no doubt that there was a certain internal relation between the piteous lessons of the Russo-Japanese War, and the act of the two Terrorists Sazonoff and Sikorski, who prepared the destruction of this living emblem of Tsardom. These relations, however, are far-fetched. The stupefying internal disorganisation of the Tsarian *régime*—which will be set forth below—had long been felt by Russia; the disasters in Manchuria merely impressed on the whole civilised world, after twenty-five years of obstinate blindness, the lessons that the Russian People had learned too well during this period of oppression. Carried into execution, as it was, after the great *exposé* of Tsarist decadence that resulted from the war, the murder of Plehve has met with general sympathy. Still it is absolutely certain that the appalling rush to the abyss accomplished by the Internal Administration was more than adequate to arm the Terrorists, and to provoke an outbreak of hatred and of hope which could never have resulted from any single act, in consequence of this typical crime.

And, in fact, the entire Russian Nation, sinking beneath its load of misfortunes, was expecting and counting on an event of this character as a means of expressing its feelings. It would have taken place even had there been no war. The intellectual leaders of the Russian People were well aware of this. They had been thinking for more than two years of striking a decisive blow, and only hesitated at the difficulty of striking true. Without entering in detail—as in a game of chess—into all the possible strokes and counter-strokes in which one or another violent and sensational act might involve the Russian Nation, their national instinct had, if we may venture to say so, led them to

regard the startling death of Plehve as the catastrophe best calculated for the sudden stirring of the apathy of the fettered masses to virile anger. The assassination of Plehve was, in fact, decided on as early as 1902. For two years every attempt was futile. But—a fact well worthy of notice—the Russian People believed more and more in the inevitable execution of the crime: towards the end they expected it from day to day. Public opinion—hidden, but none the less alive, though sullen and oppressed—was impatient to see the deed of lynch law accomplished. The extreme importance of this act, once performed, was so well understood by all classes of society, that the Grand Duchess Elizabeth said to a foreign lady, some time before the event, that "the assassination of Plehve would be the beginning of the end;" whilst men of science, barristers, doctors, to say nothing of the groups of artisans or secret political societies, were already resolving upon the line of conduct that they would adopt after the disappearance of the individual who had gained personal control over all the forces of Tsardom for the sole purpose of distributing them freely in the interests of the egoistical caste that predominated. This impatience reached even the greatest personages in the capital. From mysterious sources, now published, considerable sums of money were placed at the disposal of the intangible Terrorist Group, who, in the face of everyone, plotted the catastrophe. Manufacturers, princes, even society ladies, contributed to the expenses of the plot—less, perhaps, for the sake of their country, than from a desire to experience the emotion of creating a "sensation." The expenses, indeed, were enormous. It was necessary to have a system of surveillance to note the slightest movement of the destined victim. It was necessary, in spite of the dangers which beset

the Cause, to abrogate the principle of the Terrorist Group, which consists in never forming a fixed association, in never allowing one member to know more than two or three others, in never having any headquarters, in never enlisting more than a few adherents in each locality. The task of the assassins was extremely difficult, and took a long time to execute. A counter-police was indispensable to spy out all the details of the Ministerial police-bodyguard, and the assassins' system was even more elaborately organised and stronger than the Tsar's. The Minister expended a sum of 400,000 roubles—more than £40,000—a year on personal police protection. He went out in a carriage of peculiar shape and hermetically sealed, which had blinds of nickel-plated steel, proof against revolver bullets and even shrapnel. The streets he traversed were filled with innumerable droskies occupied by his agents; and it was amid this crowd of vehicles, which stopped for nothing, that he drove about. Long and intricate corridors separated his official cabinet from the outside world: every visitor unknown to the high officials was searched in a degrading manner before entering his presence. His following of five hundred personal agents watched, tracked down, arrested, and deported all who were suspected of disapproval of his policy. Under these circumstances the Terrorist organisation struggled against unheard-of obstacles. But it had valuable co-operation. By the spring of 1904, more than £8,000 must have been spent in preparing for the "crime." A safe house was wanted—not, of course, at St. Petersburg—for the study of infernal machines and for the centralising of preparatory experiments. Of its precise locality the majority of the members of the *Boyevaya Organisatsia*, or "Defensive League," were as ignorant as the police.

This house had to be bought; a safe porter had to be found—a most difficult matter in a country where the Police possesses the monopoly of these employés, who are one and all secret agents under orders to communicate particulars of every inhabitant or visitor in each house to their chief. But as, for some years, revolutionaries devoted to the cause have enlisted in the Police, this obstacle was surmounted. An extraordinarily simple plan of action, but one demanding the utmost coolness and precision from its organisers, was decided on, and the fatal moment arrived.

The war broke out, and from the very first of the Russian defeats, which were less tragic than grotesque, it was felt that the crime in preparation would assume an international importance which had not at first been apparent. Yet the Terrorists at this time felt uneasy. It was just then that the Russian military caste, in a moment of infatuation, concocted a desperate intrigue—to be given in detail later—which was to involve England and France in the war, and thus save the situation. This eventuality might endanger the results expected from Plehve's suppression; a universal war would relegate Russian domestic affairs to the second place. These matters were communicated to us in the course of a memorable conversation. We had just returned from St. Petersburg—where, by a happy chance, we had co-operated in the unmasking of the abominable intrigue against the world's peace—when a Russian revolutionary presented himself.

"Do you believe," he asked, "that France would allow herself to be involved in the war?"

"Not a bit of it—Why?"

"Because in that case it would be advisable to postpone a decisive event connected with the de-

liverance of the Russian people: an event which might put an end to the war."

"Your plan, then, is to weaken the Russian army at the front? Briefly, to put a stop to mobilisation? That's a very difficult matter."

"You know the Yenesei Bridge?"

"Ah! I begin to understand. You propose to blow it up when the ice breaks. But you would want at least two supports, and the damage would be repaired in a month."

"Thanks for the information; but there is another point. Has it ever occurred to you that Plehve dominates the whole policy?"

"Yes, certainly, and a good many other things into the bargain."

"Do you really believe that he is universally detested, even by his colleagues? If he fell, would the system be changed?"

"They will not permit his downfall, because besides him there is no one who can carry on this system. And the system will be maintained, because it is the last bulwark of Tsardom. In view of the growing indignation, small concessions would inevitably lead, by a natural development, to greater ones. It would be a snowball—a repetition of the history of France from 1789 to 1793. And they know that. The Grand Duke Vladimir is an expert on the subject. They won't go off on that tack, unless absolutely compelled."

"Then, if Plehve were to disappear, there would, according to you, be absolute chaos, or rather, things would tend that way?"

"Just so."

"This really is your conviction? You believe that

the Russian people are ripe to take advantage of such a situation?"

"Yes, for they are strong enough numerically. But they want a stimulus, a powerful incentive. And you all believe that defeat in Manchuria, on a sufficiently large scale, would furnish such an incentive."

"I believe," he guardedly replied, "that if the hope of assured enfranchisement were set before the people, they would be more powerfully attracted than by any excess of misfortunes."

"Obviously so."

"Ah!" he exclaimed in much excitement. "Thank you. That decides me. Plehve shall disappear. Consider yourself one of the culprits."

A fortnight later the Hôtel du Nord at St. Petersburg was gutted by a violent explosion. A bomb that was really intended for Plehve destroyed nineteen innocent victims. The tragedy had its grotesque side. The owner of the bomb had just arrived at the hotel, and, leaving two portmanteaux in his bedroom, had locked the door and gone out to dinner. Thereupon one of Plehve's agents, in concert with the hall-porter, who was himself a police officer, picked the lock and searched the luggage of the traveller, who was a suspect. One valise was nothing less than the infernal machine itself, and while the policeman was opening it, it exploded. The entire quarter was agitated. The traveller, who was dining with a friend on the Nevskii Prospekt a short distance off, heard the explosion.

"Well," he remarked, "so much for that! It has missed fire. What idiots! We must try again another time."

He settled his bill on pretext of going to see what was happening, repaired to the railway station opposite,

and returned home—without paying for his room at the hotel.

This tragi-comic incident made a far greater impression in Russia than in Europe—for in Russia the Press, when it is not paid to tell lies, is at the mercy of a Governmental Press Bureau. There are in Russia thirteen millions of people who can read, out of one hundred and thirty million inhabitants, and among these thirteen millions there was not one who did not instantly see that this explosion was a frustrated attempt to assassinate Plehve. To tell the truth—and, as the object of this work is exclusively to contribute to historic truth, we must not shrink from recording it—the disappointment was general throughout Russia, Poland, Finland, the Caucasus, and Siberia. Owing to the extreme rigour of the censorship, the Press had to invent curious means of conveying this news. A great, but by no means revolutionary, Journal in South Russia had a happy idea which was paraphrased many times throughout the whole Empire. "It is inconceivable," it said, "that the criminal who possessed this infernal machine should have been guilty of the gross imprudence of neglecting for a moment the supervision of his bomb. Had he no thought or care for the numerous innocent victims of the explosion? One stands aghast at the stupidity of these Anarchists."

The expression *innocent victims* evidently implies the existence of a *guilty* victim; the *stupidity* lies in the fact of not having known how to time the explosion so that it might take place at the intended spot. The *gross imprudence* evidently consisted in having killed a score of poor citizens instead of Plehve, and, at the same time, denotes that the Journal was already well aware that the "anarchist" was not there! For a week, however,

Plehve issued innumerable despatches affirming the death of the criminal. He even gave the man's name, address, and portrait! At the same time he lost no time in appropriating an extra 80,000 roubles (about £8,000) for the purpose of reinforcing the police.

Too late! A profound shock had passed through the people. All who had silently anticipated the salutary upheaval speculated on what might have been, if "the Anarchist had been less keen about his dinner." And they were legion: Russian artisans, intellectuals, people practising the liberal professions, Poles, Little Russians, Finlanders, Armenians, Georgians, even, though less consciously, the mass of illiterate peasants. Of course, the Terrorists were well informed of the general disappointment, and were powerfully stimulated by it. They reorganised the enterprise—and avoided hotels.

An automobile was purchased—it is not necessary to advertise the maker. It was painted in the identical colours of the postal motor-cars that collect letters from the pillar-boxes in St. Petersburg. It proved an invaluable auxiliary. On the morning of July 28, Sazonoff and Sikorski, each armed with a pyroxyline bomb, appeared opposite the Warsaw Railway Station. Presently the swarm of police droskies arrived surrounding the carriage-fortress of Plehve. At that point, as previously arranged, a postal motor-van, going at a high speed, tried to intercept the procession. It stopped in the midst of it. The doomed carriage stood still for two seconds—not more; at the third it was blown to atoms, together with the man it sheltered, by the bomb hurled by Sazonoff. The automobile made off at full speed; the signal of the Revolution had been given!

In a hundred years' time this episode will have as-

sumed the rank of an historic act of the first significance. The consequences of the disappearance of this ill omened personage were greater, and also infinitely more rapid, than had been anticipated by the most enthusiastic Terrorist. It proved to be the impetus required to arouse the apathetic masses. Hope was awakened. By a spasmodic, almost instantaneous impulse, they morally shook off their yoke, and insisted openly, in the face of the scared Autocrat's spies, on the practical execution of their demands.

From the day of Plehve's death Russia was a changed country. Wonder of wonders, a Russian Nation declared its existence! Hitherto, no one had thought that it existed, save as an abstract principle. Now it was agitating, at least speaking, complaining, telling its hatreds and sufferings! From that day, from those memorable weeks in which Russia began to live, from those months in which, behind the screen of a corrupt Press which shut France off with a Chinese Wall of falsehood and treachery, the friendly and allied Nation was launched on the track which France could have traced for her a hundred years earlier—from that period of the resurrection of the soul of Russia the face of the world was changed. For the Tsardom, whose brilliant exterior of murderous omnipotence had till then dazzled even free countries—the Despotism transmitted from Genghiz Khan to the Romanoffs, and from the Romanoffs to the degenerate, morbid, and ill-fated German dynasty of the Holstein-Gottorps—entered into its death-agony.

It was a fact unique in history! At no time, whether at the fall of the Bastille, or the advent of Cromwell, or the defeat of the followers of Genghiz Khan by the Chinese peasants, or after the rout of Karkemisk, where

fell the all-powerful Assyrian dynasty—at no period has any race so promptly seized upon the profound significance of external events as did the Russians on this memorable occasion. The reason is, that all the contradictory occurrences which have staggered the world since the fatal date, and are explained by learned commentators as the *beginnings* of the popular agitation, are, in reality, the outcome of it. The agitation began twenty-five—fifty years ago, with Sevastopol. The nationalities subjected to Tsardom — Slavs and Turanians—have all a psychology differing considerably from that of the Latin nations. With them great struggles are silent. Just as their interminable plains are covered by the wan, monotonous, desolate snows, whilst underneath the seeds are germinating throughout the gloomy winter, so the crushing, barren, uniform desolation of despotism has hidden from the eyes of the outside world the various phases of national development. According to a well-known physiologist, birth is the most dangerous and difficult event of the life of an individual. The same applies to the life of a nation. It is the embryonic existence that determines the future being. In the case of Western nations it too often shows itself by futile external agitations; with the Slavonic races it is manifested in the developments of consciousness. This development, this mental transformation, which reached its apogee, and came to light on the historic day of the Liberators' exploit, is what at the present moment determines the "Russian Crisis," as its well-wishers call it; the "Russian Revolution," as it is termed by the Independents.

This transformation of the Russian national conscience under the wing of despotism, which has been, and still is, the most astounding anachronism of our time, is

undoubtedly the most important phenomenon, and the most pregnant with results, that we of these days could possibly contemplate. How has it come about? To what is it tending?

No psychologist has ever been able to analyse or describe the development of simple individual consciousness, let alone that of a nation. But there are roundabout ways of doing it. Without any theoretical demonstration, and by simply outlining some of the innumerable facts that are accountable for this transformation, we may endeavour to interpret the latter. The human mind is, fundamentally, identical everywhere. We shall find ourselves affected after the same fashion as the Tsar's subjects if we allow the material facts to act upon ourselves in imagination, as in their tangible form they have influenced the numberless victims of Russian autocracy.

The sum-total of these facts is so vast that it would be useless to analyse it! In order to give a clear picture of the general state of things, we must abstract some of the more typical and salient points. The various classes of society, the different channels of official activity, will be represented by their most impressive actions. Since as a whole these constitute the organism of the Russian Empire, the sum of these detached facts will give us a fairly exact picture of the moral influences to which the Russian national consciousness has been subjected, and, consequently, of that transformation which culminated in the Revolution.

The Tsar, the only responsible person, who takes upon himself to think and act for his hundred and thirty millions of subjects; the Grand Dukes, his relatives; and the whole train of courtiers who compose their following, lewd parasites, in great request by reason of their

personal contact with the Autocrat; the Ministers, and innumerable army of officials—unconscionable blood-suckers, but none the less the real masters of the Nation; the people themselves, merchants, peaceable townsfolk, unfortunate artisans, innumerable peasants, the *élite*, the thinkers, and the revolutionaries: all these different elements must be analysed—some in their triumphs, others in their sufferings.

It is indeed impossible to observe the tide of the National Awakening, hidden as it is behind the impenetrable screen of the Censor and of sterile discussions, or to appraise the chances of the Revolution and its consequences to the balance of power in Europe and Asia, without going to the source of the present chaos, and piecing together from the mosaic of small historic events the general picture of the economic and political conditions created by the Tsar's *régime*, and the evolution of the national consciousness towards the destruction of Tsardom.

We may laugh at these facts, in order not to weep over them. And laughing we give precedence to those who claim it: to the Reigning Dynasty of Degenerates and Fools, along with their servile flunkeys.

CHAPTER I

THE DYNASTY AND THE COURT

IN the Russian Revolution, which is now beginning, as in the Muscovite Despotism, which is in its death-throes, everything gravitates round the individual who claims to be, at one and the same time, the symbol and the dictator of all spiritual and political authority. The Revolution depends in great measure in its course, as well as in its chances, upon this personage, himself an anachronism, who theoretically claims omnipotence, while in reality he is merely the fulcrum of a caste of tyrants. It is only by attacking the Tsar that the ruling party can be defeated, and this caste accordingly plays upon the Tsar to serve its own petty ends of self-protection.

What is the meaning of "Tsar"? Originally a simple error in spelling, "C'sar," for "Cæsar," it has become an elegant euphemism, a high-sounding title screening the degeneracy of certain individuals who strut about in the muck-heaps of a foul *régime*. Between these two extremes Tsardom has been a very tangible brute force, based on the powerful interests of certain groups of tyrants, who are incapable of maintaining themselves without the illusive symbol of a central despotism. The Tsar, in short, has ever been the product and the instigator of moral corruption.

Even his title is only a corruption of the Latin, Cæsar! And the adoption of this title was merely a false pretence—a vain attempt to prove that a petty Asiatic despot reigning at Moscow was the direct inheritor of the Byzantine Empire! The introduction of the famous double-headed eagle was but a larceny perpetrated on the Byzantine dynasty after it had succumbed to the Ottoman invasion. Since their inglorious entry into the political history of the world the Tsars have been supreme for three hundred and sixty-eight years, and their methods have not altered. Their "dynastic credit" has steadily waxed fat on falsehood, and the mental attitude of the "great families" is that of breeders of racehorses. Position is appraised only by length of pedigree, no matter of what order. A Russian Grand Duchess will not shake hands with a workman, but she embraces her poodle. "I cannot understand such love for a dog," observed Her Highness's doctor. "Why," she replied, "I can follow his pedigree through twenty generations—it is perfect!"

Since a mass of people with defective brains still look upon the lengthy pedigree of a dynasty as a reason for respecting it, and as a proof of historic right, we will oppose to Nicholas II., the resplendent scion of a noble race, the picture of Nicholas II., the ultimate product of an insignificant family of degenerates. The official genealogy of the Tsar goes back to a Norman King named Rurik, who, in the tenth century, conquered a part of Russia; but this story is in the last degree apocryphal. The Ruriks had just time to steal the title of Tsar and the escutcheon of the eagle from the Lower Empire. Then they vanished. After an interregnum of thirty years the Muscovite landowners elected from among themselves a Tsar of the name of Romanoff.

This was a brilliant inspiration, since this dynasty, by its murders, wars, and treasons, created the Russian Autocracy. With the children of Peter the Great this dynasty also became extinct; it had lasted exactly one hundred and fifty years—from 1613 to 1762. A kinsman of the Romanoffs, Duke Peter Ulrich of Holstein-Gottorp-Oldenburg, next had the luck to mount the Russian throne. He was the founder of the reigning family, which has not hesitated to usurp the title of Romanoff, just as the Ruriks had usurped that of Cæsar.

This dynasty was, and still is, purely German. Under its rule, German ideas, methods, statesmen and habits have dominated Russia. For a long time the Russians themselves retained a vivid recollection of their older rulers. In the south, among the Ruthenians, who were reduced to serfdom by their new Tsars, after enjoying a Republican constitution, it still persists. "Oh! for a Dolgoroki or a Miloradovitch! What good Tsars they were! At any rate, they were Russians!" is the cry still heard in the villages of Little Russia. Or they jest about the nationality of the rulers who now oppress them, and say, "In Russia, who are Germans? The Officials. Who besides? The Professors. Who else? The Rich People. And who next? The Generals. And then? The Ministers. And lastly? The Tsar." They generally add that the French are less important: they only provide the dancing masters, cooks, barbers, and—*demi-mondaines*. But the survival of the idea underlying these bucolic jokes is significant; the more so as the Empress Elizabeth, who nominated the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp heir to the throne, was hardly as lucky in her choice as the electors of Michael Romanoff in 1613. She bestowed on Russia a dynasty of fools!

PETER III. AND PAUL I.

The founder of the new dynasty was afflicted not only with an extremely ambitious wife, a German like himself, but also with dropsy complicated by brain disease brought on by alcoholic excess. He unfortunately transmitted these blemishes to his son by the Empress Catherine, prior to her devotion to her various lovers. Paul I., heir to the throne, was as legitimate as he was epileptic. The profound physical and moral degeneration of the ancestor to whom Nicholas II. owes the equivocal good fortune of occupying the Russian throne, was so revolting that Catherine bribed the brothers Orloff by her choicest favours to assassinate him. They easily delivered her from a husband of whom it is said that his rubicund countenance lit up with an idiotic grin when the arrival of the conspirators, at the head of several regiments, was announced to him. During the reign of Catherine the Great, Princess of Anhalt, the heir to the throne, the spurious Romanoff Paul, had leisure to develop both his stupidity and his epilepsy. When, at last, he came to exercise a power from which the alienists ought for ever to have debarred him, he managed, between his fits, to commit such a succession of follies, such monstrous political and judicial abuses, such incoherent actions in his cerebral decay, that his suppression became a necessity to the weal of the public. The act of purification was accomplished by the madman's Councillors, with the knowledge of his eldest son, the "gentle idealist," Alexander I. The truth is that the Imperial grandmother regarded her son, Paul, as such an absolute imbecile, that she had ruled him out of the Succession in favour of her grandson. The official Act to this effect as drawn

up by Catherine was actually submitted to Alexander by Prince Biezborodski, but Paul, who required an unlimited field of action during his attacks of dementia, had seized a favourable moment to rescind it.

ALEXANDER I.

Alexander I., whose father and mother were Germans, was, in addition to the megalomania inherited from his grandmother, Catherine, endowed with the critical spirit of the "nation of thinkers and dreamers." He undoubtedly believed that he was contributing to the ultimate recovery of his father by conniving at his assassination. Unfortunately he inherited the epileptic tendencies of the dynasty, as exhibited in the two typical forms of intellectual weakness which constitute the red thread in the history of the Holstein-Gottorps—amnesia and a characteristic mysticism. These two hereditary defects, added to his megalomania, dominated the glorious reign of Alexander I. He abounded in incoherent expressions and in tears; savage and sentimental by turns, he took refuge in mystical inspiration whenever his excitable brain went off its balance. He would have approved himself a veritable puppet on the throne, if the ominous grandeur of Napoleon had not, during the greater part of his reign, obliged his Councillors to follow a certain well-defined course of action. Even thus, the confusion whenever the Tsar's personal decision was inevitable, was extreme. He wept, not with grief, but from joy, when he heard of Napoleon's victories, like a megalomaniac affected by the notes of the *Sinfonia Eroica*. He wept again on the day Napoleon captured Oldenburg, the cradle of the "Russian" dynasty, but this time over a letter from the dispossessed Grand Duke, availing himself of family ties to implore assistance. The

ties of vitiated blood appealed to him; in twenty-four hours he became as bitter an enemy of the Corsican as he had hitherto been his admirer. A flow of tears changed history! He left it to his Generals and Ministers to clear up the situation. When the French epic was concluded, and the reign of unavoidable necessities done away with, the hybrid soul of the Sovereign could stretch its wings. His mysticism now became apparent —and such mysticism! It consisted in appealing to the superhuman whenever his own mind was at some morbid *impasse*. Under the influence of certain ancient female devotees, the Tsar, who had been afflicted with senile decay since his fiftieth year, constituted himself the prophet of the Holy Alliance. His decadence is easily explained. This man, who had been unable to beget a legitimate heir, had managed, as one of his ministers observed, "to add at least eight hundred bastards to the population of Poland." His amnesia led him into mysticisms, which gradually induced the habit of recourse to magical arts, to supplement his own mental deficiencies. The despotic manifestations of this folly at last became so unbearable that radical measures were again imperative. The Tsar died of a "certain fever," familiar to the Borgias!

NICHOLAS I.

The throne should have reverted to his brother Constantine. It was hoped that this would happen, since he had been endowed by his father with a mental weakness so complete that it was with the greatest possible effort that he ate his meals decently, even at official banquets. Unfortunately, Alexander obliged him to abdicate in favour of the third brother, Nicholas, who was not only afflicted with amnesia, hallucinations

of persecution, epileptic fits, and irresistible attacks of cruelty to animals, but also suffered from a megalomania resembling that of the Chinese Boxers. This was manifested in his faith in his own invulnerability, and an appearance of energy which deceived his *entourage*. These different qualities combined to create a *régime* of the worst oppression ever known, with a superposed system of unparalleled jobbery.

"What, blockhead!" he said in a towering rage to Fraenkel, the financier, who, like himself, was a German, "you complain that the tax-collectors rob the Treasury? You mustn't stop them! Don't you see that as long as they can thieve, they will love the Tsar, and defend him against subversive intrigues?"

In conjunction with peculation, he considered science the best support of his morbid omnipotence. He remarked one day to the Orientalist, Schmidt (also, of course, a German), who had translated and commented on the Buddhist texts of Tibet, and was requesting the Tsar to have the work printed at his expense:—"Herr Schmidt, by all means go on translating; but it will be for me, I think, to decide whether in this work ('The Wise Man and the Fool') the *rôle* of 'wise man' is assigned to one who makes a practice of principles identical with those of my Government; the Minister of Police (!) shall submit to me a report upon the scientific value of this work."

This narrow-mindedness naturally culminated in disaster, as a result of systematic dishonesty, systematic ignorance, and the suppression of all initiative. Sevastopol was the end. The general incapacity, and the fraudulency of those days, were absolutely identical with what is now going on in Manchuria; and it is, therefore, superfluous to describe them. But what is

interesting—although not yet repeated at Port Arthur —was the sudden and mysterious death of Nicholas I., —"of a broken heart," said the official historians; "of a nervous attack," pretended the courtiers; "of a paroxysm of madness," according to the doctors; whilst others hinted that the cause of death was really "an overdose of nux vomica"—the inference being that they had made ready the potion.

ALEXANDER II.

With Nicholas' son, Alexander II.,—the Great, the Liberator, — this dynasty of pathological specimens enters, so to speak, the contemporary period. A German, of course, on both his father's and his mother's side, he had inherited not only all the vices of the Holstein-Gottorps, but also—an especially serious matter in an Autocrat surrounded by a *coterie* of brutes invested with absolute power,—the undefined idealism of Louise, his Prussian grandmother. Perhaps this accounted for the grievous metamorphosis to the sexual exuberance of the epileptic, which, from his youth upwards, distinguished him from his stalwart uncle, Alexander I. From the age of eighteen, according to official records, his general health was greatly strained by his excesses. Travel and amusements availed him little. "His health improved only in old age." The pursuit of non-existent ideals dominated his policy, as well as his private life: everything moved him deeply, "owing to the disproportion between the reality and his conceptions." He was ever, to use the expression of his friends, "the whimpering Tsar." He made up for his want of understanding by the strength of his emotions.

The latter would sometimes lead him to humane theories, but since on each occasion his incapacity

obliged him to let them be carried out by individuals who had every interest in continuing the evil system of Nicholas I., not one of his just reforms ever came into being. The abolition of serfdom, conceived after Sevastopol in a moment when a sense of bitter remorse (which his father should have felt) constrained him to seek inspiration in Biblical sources, resulted only in the creation of a fresh, and even more terrible, thraldom. For the same reason, the "great reforms of the sixties," which he had planned, but did not know how to organise, ended in a farce which exasperated the more intelligent of his subjects. For this reason, also, when he saw the failure of his enterprises, the Sovereign fell from one fit of depression into another, believing himself meanwhile to be a misunderstood genius. His acrimony grew in proportion as the amnesia from which he suffered, like his ancestors, precluded him from the possibility of controlling (as he would have wished, and as he imagined himself doing) the execution of his vague notions of reform, impossible because incompatible with the principle of his Divine authority, which he still clung to. His lackeys understood him better than he did himself. They acted in the spirit of Nicholas I., and played the comedy on the lines of Alexander II.

The result was the complete unsettling of the organisation of the Empire, and still more of the Emperor's mind. Nihilism sprang up naturally from the contradiction existing between mystical intentions and despotic actions. Nihilism, which is the exasperation of intellects at bay, induced the afflicted Emperor, who had become mentally a mere wastrel, to assume the character of a misunderstood benefactor vindicating himself for his good intentions. This phase created what is known as the "white terror." Repeated attempts on his life threw

him back on the idealism of a martyr, and absolute incoherence henceforth influenced his decisions. The fear of what might happen from without, the fear of his own ideas, reduced him, if one may venture the expression, to the condition of an animal hunted by itself. His incoherence transmitted itself to the State. Russia passed through a period of tension and of melancholy trouble as unbearable as the evil which was sapping the mind of her master. Dictatorship and constitution were decided on one and the same day. "Broken by emotion, the Emperor withdrew from everything," said the official records: they forgot to add that the country, also "broken by emotion," experienced the agonies of uncertainty. The situation was alike intolerable for oppressors and oppressed. The former, eager for any change, assisted Nihilism, which was excited by the same appetite. Between them both, they succeeded, on the one hand by making bombs, on the other by voluntary indifference to the danger. The poor patient, the only one out of the interminable degenerate offspring of Paul III. who deserves sympathy, at last succumbed to his vices. Like Faust, "Two souls possessed his breast." They stultified each other and the fatal result of his psychical efforts could only abut in annihilation. Despite his poetical flights—which he believed to be in the interests of his policy—despite the morbid exaltation, and, so to speak, virginal sensitiveness of his exhausted brain, Alexander II., having governed in a vicious circle, was obliged to leave Russia where his father, by his transports of brutality, had placed her.

ALEXANDER III.

The next generation evinces a phase of degeneracy which too often precedes the ultimate extinction of an

epileptic stock. Tuberculosis, with all its ill-starred influences on the vitality of the brain—extreme exaltation of erotomania, sudden alternations from absolute apathy to violent effort, unexpected and illogical chains of thought, associations of bizarre and too swift ideas, the special form of amnesia which effaces the intermediate links between the first vague notion in a train of thought and the same idea in its final development, lastly, the morbid sensibility which at each moment interrupts these already abnormal processes, and substitutes incoherency of emotional impressions for reasoning—the whole clinical schedule of a tuberculous psychosis revealed itself, and has never since abandoned the dynasty. The eldest son of Alexander II. died of consumption at an age when the second son was too old to efface from his mind the deep traces of a depressing education, shrewdly conceived with the view of depriving him of any idea that might have incited him to covet or defy Imperial authority. His natural and already morbid timidity had been developed to such a degree as to convert it into an habitual terror. He had been kept aloof from that knowledge of the world which is so indispensable to all who are destined to shine at a sumptuous Court. When he suddenly became heir to the throne, his mental attitude, habits, and knowledge were irredeemably warped. And to this defect, cultivated by his parents, and still more so by his tutors (the principal of whom was Pobiedonostseff, now Procurator of the Synod), were added all the blemishes of hereditary tuberculosis! Alexander III., when he came to the throne, was sometimes afraid of his own shadow, sometimes violent to excess. Owing to absolute ignorance of the affairs he was supposed to direct, he was at the mercy of whosoever knew

how to take advantage of the right moment, whether during his moods of depression or of passion. The death of his father left him in a lamentable state of moral confusion. His religious emotions threw him at first into a phase of morbid contrition; he looked upon the murder of his father as a sort of atonement, since without the Will of God the crime would have been impossible. He submitted this matter of conscience to his spiritual father, Pobiedonostseff, who, it afterwards transpired, was alarmed at the unexpected result of his tuition. The dictator, Loris Melikoff, however, confirmed the Tsar in his humility. When he appeared at the first official Family Council he announced to the horrified Grand Dukes, trembling with emotion, that it was his intention to promulgate the Constitution signed by his father, "because"—an unexpected expression from the mouth of a Tsar—"he shrank from the formidable task of governing the nation by himself." His brothers, Vladimir, Alexis, and Serge, who feared that with Autocracy the possibility of enjoying their morbid passions with impunity would also pass away, put their heads together to defeat the purpose of their Imperial brother. The first discussion threw the Tsar into a fearful fit of rage and terror at seeing himself dominated by his brothers. He demanded the right of humility! Pobiedonostseff was sent for post-haste; there was a tearful, touching scene, and a promise to seek light by prayer. The Terrorists despatched a letter announcing a truce of three months from any hostile attempts, to allow him time to promulgate the Constitution. This was the chance of salvation!

At the moment of the outrage the all-important document had been on the Emperor's desk at the palace. At the second Family Council, the dictator, Loris Melikoff,

and Alexander III. carried the day, and declared that it was their duty, in view of the general ebullition, and clearly expressed popular feeling, to give immediate effect to the projects of the murdered Sovereign; moreover, since the document had been signed it was theoretically valid in law. Terrorism was verging upon a practical issue: Loris Melikoff subsequently admitted this fact in conversation, and it was, moreover, personally confirmed by the Grand Duke Constantine. But the man who was reactionary to the back-bone—Plehve, the young Chief of the Secret Police—was on the watch. An event of this nature would have stopped his career—his sinister detective activity would have been put out of court by the introduction of a form of government involving responsibilities towards an authority controlled by the nation.

The letter which the Nihilist party had addressed to the Tsar after the outrage contained this passage: "Confident of the high intelligence and wisdom of the Emperor, and assured of the inauguration of a Constitution, the Party is suspending all terrorist action for the space of three months, pending the necessary reforms, but is ready to resume action after the delay accorded."

Plehve got possession of this letter, and obtaining an immediate audience induced the Tsar to believe that it was merely an expression of weakness on the part of the Nihilists. "If they were sufficiently strong to proceed," said he, "they would not for a moment hesitate to plan fresh outrages. The ultimatum appears to me to prove that the movement can still be suppressed." The advice of the police officer forthwith prevailed with the malleable Emperor over that of the Dictator himself.

The simple word "ultimatum" changed the situation.

Loris Melikoff has related how the Tsar burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter: contrition had given place to anger. They were insulting him: they were insulting God! He must have vengeance: the relentless, morbid vengeance of a tuberculous and sexually perverted invalid. Plehve was then and there ordered to hunt out the Nihilists, vested with the fullest plenipotential powers. Then the Emperor dressed in full uniform; and within an hour, to the extreme discomfiture of the Dictator, he made a blatant speech at the third Council, emphasised by sharp thrusts of his sword on the floor, announcing that "His Divine duty commanded him to maintain the immutable principle of Autocracy intact, whatever happened!" The Tsar superciliously accepted the felicitations of his relatives, tolerated the unctuous approbation of Pobiedonostseff, and then retired, to collapse in a fearful attack of nerves. It was on such incoherencies and suggestibility, such alternations of rage and depression, that the fate of one of the greatest Empires of the world depended.

This fit of frantic energy had disappeared by the following day: Alexander III. left the control of affairs to the high bureaucracy thus thoughtlessly launched upon a *régime* of oppression from which, in sheer terror of being accused of weakness, he no longer dared draw back. This, as we shall presently see, was the golden age of bureaucrats, extortioners, and lawlessness. Pobiedonostseff was the true Regent, and the Tsaritsa's Danish acuteness saw no security for the dynasty, in view of her husband's incapacity, save in the uncontrolled activity of these bureaucrats, who at least knew what they were about. Alexander III. was soon relegated to the position of a mere machine for signing documents. He even

kept aloof from his relatives: his wife, who professed boundless affection for him, and who alone had any direct influence, limited her efforts to inducing him to avoid the emotions involved for a hated Autocrat in his obligations to take part in the Government. Shut up for the greater part of the year in the Palace of Gatshina —a fortress-castle such as one reads of in the penny-dreadful, with complicated passages, mysterious corridors, trap-doors designed to do away with unsuspected intruders, dark closets, and mediæval outlets—Alexander III. and his eldest son more often occupied themselves in felling trees in the park than in governing the country.

In evidence of this we have the Grand Duke Constantine's story. Hastening back from a prolonged journey to salute his cousin, and inform him of the prestige he enjoyed in foreign parts, he was informed on arriving at Gatshina that His Majesty was in the Park. Accordingly he repaired thither, and discovered the Autocrat of All the Russias in a wood, axe in hand, in his shirt-sleeves, hacking furiously at the trunk of a fir-tree. The resigned manner in which the Tsar welcomed the Grand Duke contrasted so strongly with the agreeable things he had intended to say to him that the Duke kept silence. "Does that surprise you?" asked the Tsar, pointing to his hatchet.

"Well, for a Tsar——"

"So far as I can see, this is all I can do until the Nihilists are wiped out."

It is the Grand Duke who tells the story. And it was thus that the sinister terrors of the Tsar were utilised by the unscrupulous caste that had usurped his authority.

The Grand Dukes themselves, whether Conservatives

like Vladimir and Serge, or Liberals like Constantine, suffered both materially and morally from this bizarre situation, since they found themselves placed thereby at the mercy of the bureaucrats who governed in the Tsar's place. Vladimir unceasingly upbraided the Emperor for his want of energy, and the general irritation found vent in harsh words, even in the presence of strangers. In 1883, Vladimir exclaimed at a grand fête, "He will never do anything, his terror is quite ridiculous. He ought to trim the road all the way from St. Petersburg to Moscow with gibbets, each ornamented by a Nihilist. He hasn't even the pluck to defend himself."

The Grand Duke had, and still has, good reason for his ill-humour. With him the hereditary vices had assumed a less terrible form, physiologically speaking; he was merely afflicted with a complete absence of moral sense, and an irresistible *penchant* for drink and gambling. Moreover, he had two sons, Cyril and Boris, with comparatively strong constitutions; and he hoped that one of these would some day inherit the succession from Alexander III., whose three sons were all invalids, one, Nicholas II., being epileptic, and the other two tuberculous. The Grand Duke's interest in the energetic maintenance of absolute autocracy at all costs is therefore thoroughly explained; and his anger with Alexander III.—who was, in his opinion, culpably neglecting his duties as Tsar—resulted from vexation at seeing the Imperial powers squandered.

The Monarch, becoming more and more of a dullard, implicitly obeyed his *entourage*, and even listened, without flinching, to the "Marseillaise," whose strains had formerly reminded him of the execution of Louis XVI. At length, when his moral and physical health was com-

pletely vitiated, the trouble which had lain dormant for forty years asserted itself. The Tsar, a colossal wreck like his Empire, succumbed to miliary tuberculosis.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF NICHOLAS II.

The astounding pathological history of the Holstein-Gottorp dynasty in last resort explains the entire crisis by which Russia is agitated. In a country in which the Dynastic Head is supposed to be both brain and arm of the Nation—not without further usurping its digestive functions—all morbid conditions in the Sovereign tend necessarily to State disorganisation and degeneration. This fact alone can account for the unparalleled disorder to which Russia has sunk; and this alone explains the singular attitude of the Ruler who is in all probability destined to preside over the final downfall of Muscovite Autocracy.

Nicholas is only the climax of centuries of degeneration. The frightful heredity that weighs on him would have given anyone but a Sovereign—whose prestige is his only strength—the right to a quiet retreat, far from political cares and the intellectual exigencies of modern Society, far, above all, from the tremendous responsibility of autocracy, which makes the Tsar the only man out of 130,000,000 human beings who has the privilege—if such it be—of bringing his acts into harmony with his conscience. The misfortune has been—both for himself and for the whole world—that he was left in a position which he would at once relinquish if he were at liberty to do so. The mental content of Nicholas II. is a mere figure of speech; from his earliest youth his tutors were well aware of the fact. One of his military instructors declared openly that "Nicholas II. would have been exempted from military service for insufficiency of intellect in any country, by any army

doctor." Yet he is deemed capable of governing the Russian Empire. Is this on account of his striking pathological analogy with his grandfather, Alexander II., who was undoubtedly the most sympathetic of his ancestors? The same form of precocious erotomania which exhausted the "Liberator Tsar" has drained what little vigour Nicholas was endowed with: the same lapses of memory, the same fits of hysteria, the same misplaced emotions—manifesting themselves on every occasion on which his reason is not sufficiently strong to guide his actions, the same diversity between the sentimentality of the believer and the arrogance of the Lord's Anointed. In short, the whole psychology of Alexander II. is repeated in Nicholas II., save that the psychical vices are intensified to an alarming degree in the latter. With him, the faculty for judging the true importance of a deed, by comparing it with the desired result, is completely absent. Alexander's angle of vision was normal sometimes, at least, for short periods in the course of its gradual contraction or extension, according as he alternated from hysterical exhilaration to fits of whimpering depression. These intermediate states are completely absent in Nicholas. His visual range is invariably distorted in one extreme or the other. In his boastful moods he pretends to omniscience, to control of the whole machine. He transforms the world into the image of a grandiloquent idea; he dismisses his Ministers, admonishes his relatives, shuts himself up with State documents, exacts reports of ridiculous details, on pretext of his divinely-ordered duties. He indites sonorous phrases with his own hand from which he hopes to reap miracles of good government, annotates the reports of his Ministers, not with a word of assent or blame, but with observations that are less purposeful

than involuntary, betraying his central idea in his sacerdotal style. From these states of euphoria (to borrow a clinical term) the transitions to the contrary are all too rapid. He falls asleep while discussing the Imperial Budget with his Minister Witte; he is attacked with syncope while listening to a report on famine among the peasants; he bursts into tears when asked to give the date of a journey; when required to sign a Ukase appointing one of his most important Ministers he exclaims in distress, "Let me be in peace, and do what you like." Normal serenity between these alternating states is non-existent. Everything is viewed through rose-coloured or black spectacles, according to his mental condition at the moment.

This loss of true perception of events is a terrible misfortune in an ordinary individual, but it becomes a world-wide disaster in a Russian Tsar. It is useless to go deeper into the matter, or to bring out the details and physiological corollaries of this evil. The psychological reality is sufficiently grievous. But it is equally impossible to explain away the fact by stating that such a man is scientifically irresponsible for his actions. He is so, without doubt. Nevertheless, historically speaking, he assumes the gravest possible responsibilities. His actions, irresponsible as they may be, are none the less real. Their importance is greater than that of any other human activity. Nicholas II. is not merely a "sick man;" he is a nefarious Sovereign.

A recent incident will show better than any analysis how deep-seated is the dominating characteristic of the psychology of Nicholas—his lack of any clear perception of things. For a full month after the murder of Plehve, at the very time when the whole of Russia was in arms against the Tsarian Government, when the fleet at Port

Arthur had been destroyed, and the Army in Manchuria had met with its severest reverses, Nicholas persistently refused to appoint a Minister of the Interior. During that same month he made no decision concerning the war, notwithstanding the pressing appeals of Kuropatkin, the Commander-in-Chief, who urged a total change of administration, and the suppression of the underhand intrigues of which he was the victim. Twenty times they urged the Tsar to act.

"I have not time," he invariably replied. "I have other things to attend to."

What things? Great Heaven! It transpired that he had received a voluminous report from the Ministry called by antiphrasis that of Public Instruction. And he trembled at the contents of this all-important document. The report set forth that hitherto only a few of the actors in the subsidised theatres had received decorations, and then merely those of the inferior Orders of Stanislas and St. Anne, and it ventilated the question whether it were not time to create a new decoration specially for dramatists and dramatic artists, to correspond with those granted by the French Academy.

This matter of transcendent importance took precedence for a month over such trifles as the fate of the Army at the front, or the future of the Russian Government!

The Influence of the Empresses.

The serious consequences of such errors are sometimes so obvious that they cannot escape even the intermittent attention of the Sovereign. The bad effects of carelessness of this sort have engendered in the Tsar an indecision and a fear of voluntary action which have become engrafted on to his habitually vacillating character.

Unfortunately, Nicholas has no "Danish Partner" to furnish him with the needful degree of moral stability. With the exception of Pobiedonostseff, whose influence on him has not been directly exercised for several years, the Tsar, already the prey to effeminate emotions, has become entirely subservient to three women—his Mother, his Consort, and his sister Xenia. His mother, who has become more and more bigoted and intolerant—and, in a Grand Ducal sense, more "Russian"—has ever since the death of Alexander III. been scheming to retain the position of First Woman of the Empire. She dominated Nicholas, whose moral weaknesses she knew better than anyone else; and in order not to cede her influence to the young Empress, who is still the *bête-noire* of the Grand Ducal pack, she deliberately sided with the reactionary party, who recognised their most formidable adversary in the Consort of Nicholas II. Nicholas, perceiving nothing of this change, continued implicitly to obey the dictates of his mother, who, allied with Pobiedonostseff, has succeeded in checking the liberal influence that should have emanated from his wife. His sister, Xenia, who married the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch, is only a new, and more pronounced, edition of his mother.

The young Empress lives in a sort of inferno, despite the genuine—but, unfortunately, very superficial—passion which her husband entertains for her. She has suffered a long expiation for her intellectual superiority and modern notions. She succeeded in introducing the language of her infancy—English—at the Court, but never, unfortunately, managed to inculcate the liberal views conveyed by that language. She was the Cinderella of the Circle. Reduced to inertia, disheartened by the gulf which separates her from her Asiatic *entourage*,

she has gradually lost touch with her former interest in the problems that agitate the civilised world. She no longer reads Renan, Strauss, or Feuerbach, once the companions of her pillow, the authors who have reduced Christianity to a matter of conscience. She now takes refuge in good works, and the interests of church and household absorb her. This was the desired consummation—well served, for the rest, by the misfortune that she had given no heir to the throne of Nicholas. In Russia—a fundamentally barbarous country—woman is considered, save in intellectual circles, merely as a machine for producing male children, and it is not the Tsaritsa, but the Mother of the Tsarevitch, who is the First Lady in the Empire. At that time, the brother of Nicholas was still Tsarevitch. The mother of the Tsar was still the mother of the Heir-Apparent: and had, therefore, as it were, a dynastic right to relegate the Empress to the second place. The submission of the latter was so great that she did not hesitate openly to avow the fallacy of her position. In family councils she always refused to give her opinion, and on these occasions made use of a formula which graphically describes her true position: "I have received an English education. I cannot, therefore, give advice upon matters which I understand differently."

All this should have been changed by the birth of the Tsarevitch Alexis. But the situation has only become worse, by reason of the continual interference of the Imperial mother-in-law in domestic affairs. The Tsarevitch, moreover, bears all the stigmas of his race. He suffers from convulsions, and from a certain form of infantile tuberculosis which gives rise to acute alarm. As a matter of course, the narrow-mindedness of bigoted women throws the responsibility of this on to the mother.

And since there is nothing more detrimental to a weak-minded man than to be surrounded by women with conflicting opinions, all claiming the first place in his affections, Nicholas is at a loss to find anywhere the patient adviser and the unvarying moral support which a degenerate like himself needs more than most people.

The influence of the other members of his family is still less calculated to make up for the warped judgment which afflicts His Imperial Majesty, who is perfectly aware of the secret dynastic ambitions of his uncle Vladimir. He is, moreover, informed by each Grand Duke of the private views of the others, and of the nature of their interests. Except in very important matters (when they resort to threats in order to emphasise their wishes), their absence from Court is encouraged by the Tsar!

Occult Influences.

Thus Nicholas is totally unable to obtain from others the inspiration which his own brain is incapable of initiating. It is a characteristic of the degenerates who are affected with "loss of a sense of proportion" that they suffer at the same time from a morbid fear of intellectual isolation. In the case of the Tsar, this fear has resulted, on the one hand, in a profound distrust of his *entourage*, on the other, in a desire to relieve his isolation by seeking "reliable" information, independent of that supplied by his usual advisers. The mysticism of Alexander I. and Alexander II., associated with a truly grotesque credulity in occult sources of knowledge, amounted to the same thing. The mysticism of Nicholas and its concomitant credulity is only this, a hundred-fold intensified. In his case amnesia counts for much. It prevents him, *e.g.*, from following the

arguments of his Minister of Finance. After the Hague Conference, which was merely a farce, it expunged from his mind the details of all that had happened since the invitation had been issued, on the advice of several Ministers, with the object of approving new loans—so that he received the first representative with the jovial exclamation, "Well, how are the loans going on?" perceiving too late that he had blundered into error, forgetting the Hague Congress, the connecting link between the initial idea and its final conclusion. The instinctive need of not losing the thread of events and of keeping all the necessary elements for the just prevision of the future under control, led him, like his grandfather and great-great-grandfather, to indulge in the practice of occultism. Official occultism—that is, the Orthodoxy of which he is Pope—had failed him, since its prophet, Pobiedonostseff, revolved exclusively on a basis of subtleties which are incomprehensible to the Tsar, and which are unable to offer him any direct manifestation of supernatural power.

The Court was over-run with spiritualists and clairvoyants, the most capable and honest of these (but for that very reason the one who received the least attention) being M. Demchinski, a distinguished meteorologist, who published a daily weather forecast in the great Anti-Semitic Journal, the *Novoe Vremya*. This distinguished *savant* had on various occasions the good fortune to predict fine weather for great official ceremonies, and to find his forecasts verified: notably, in 1902, when he succeeded in mysteriously obtaining sunshine, in the midst of a rainy season, for the great Spring Military Parade. Such occult gifts astonished the Tsar! Demchinski must, indeed, be a prophet; and if he was so for the Heavens, surely his gifts must apply

still more to Earth, *i.e.*, to the fate of Russia. Nicholas, during intimate confabulations, laid all his political troubles before him, ordering him to prescribe decisive measures to be taken in order to allay the growing discontent, as provoked by the terrible *régime* of Plehve. Demchinski was commanded to submit two bulky reports, in which he advocated the convening of a National Representative Assembly. The unhappy man had neglected to confer with Plehve and the Grand Dukes, and to name his price for recommending measures that would have been more agreeable to them. He was denounced as an "impostor," and, after his second report had been sent in (January, 1903), the Tsar left him to his fate, merely returning the penultimate memorandum—a garbled version of which had already appeared in the Liberal papers of London and Berlin—with the characteristic annotation, "*Everything is known to me.—Nicholas.*"

In his interviews Demchinski had explained the influences of sun, moon, and innumerable unknown forces upon the weather that presides over parades, to Nicholas. Politics might therefore be determined by the harmony of the stellar motions—a species of Court of Appeal from terrestrial affairs. Obviously, as Nicholas declared, a meteorologist is only a second-rate astrologist. But the latter are rare, and there was not one to hand. Nevertheless, the mysterious forces which transform the soul can only be emanations from the stars, and are enshrined in certain individuals, notably in masseurs, hypnotists, and spiritualists.

The Tsaritsa, acting on the advice of her husband, had placed herself in the skilful hands of a masseur from Lorraine, in hope of bearing a son. The work was long and fruitless, but the Imperial confidence remained

unshaken. After a year of effort, the expert had only obtained the gratuitous concession of a part of the Tauric Park at St. Petersburg, for the purpose of building an establishment for Swedish massage there with the Tsaritsa's money. But Nicholas, after numerous consultations, had conceived the idea that a man who claims to be able to give an heir to the Tsar can also give happiness to his Empire. He listened to the counsels of the masseur, who was secretly subsidised by Plehve, and began to distrust his only honest Minister, Witte. Unfortunately, the Municipality of the Capital respectfully protested against the abandonment of a public garden for the benefit of a sorcerer, and the Tsar in a moment of lucidity thanked the masseur, and dismissed him.

More subtle expedients were desirable. Philippe, the hypnotist, in return for the Tsar's cash, suggestionised the Tsaritsa with the notion of the delivery of a son, and, for cash from certain other sources, impressed a policy of repression upon the Tsar. Strange to say, the confidence Nicholas felt in Plehve now had no bounds, whereas the magnetic powers of the wizard were manifestly unable to procure an Heir to the Throne. On the other hand, they were vastly useful to those who paid for them. Philippe showed Nicholas by telepathy a railway for which a Moscow contractor had received some tens of millions of roubles, while he had merely put up a simple telegraph wire; and thereby succeeded in getting the Tsar to reduce the sentence which certain magistrates—unable to discover the existence of the railway in question—had inflicted on this peculator. Whilst vividly describing the plots of non-existent revolutionaries, Philippe was tactless enough to make the Tsarevitch's advent depend on the concession to a great

Belgian Company of the metal required for the building of a bridge in Asia. Nicholas took fright at such variety of interests. Hypnotism was played out.

There remained a yet more subtle thing, Spiritualism. A Frenchman from Lyons was clever enough to turn Nicholas' head and his tables simultaneously. The spirit of Alexander I., who, it appeared, was specially apt in family affairs, predicted the advent of the long looked for son! The rejoicings were general; the Tsaritsa took up her *rôle*.

The spirits, however, did more. They brought about the Russo-Japanese War. A certain number of shady officials, among them the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch, already named, the ex-Viceroy Alexeieff, and the uncanonical Minister, Bezobrazoff, concerning whom we shall have more to say presently, endeavoured to promote a gigantic enterprise with the Emperor's money and patronage. It was nominally concerned with the exploitation of immense tracts of forest-land at Yonghampo, near the Yalu in Korea, and the establishment of a financial company with the same object. It was, in reality, an incursion into Korean territory, and the attitude of Japan in view of the fraudulent annexation of Manchuria was disquieting. At the suggestion of Count Lamsdorff, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nicholas therefore ignored the project. Alexander Mikhailovitch came to the rescue, and asked the Tsar to examine the matter personally before he rejected it, and to receive Bezobrazoff again in audience. The Tsar evoked the shade of Alexander II., conqueror of Turkey! The complaisant spirit naturally told him that the affair was imperative to the welfare of Russia, that the Imperial Family ought to take it up, and that it would be the commencement of a pacific conquest of the Korea.

The next morning Bezobrazoff presented himself, in company with the Grand Duke, and repeated exactly the same advice as the Spirit had given. Nicholas, astonished and deeply impressed, promptly subscribed six millions, and undertook that his relatives would do the same. The Society put up fortifications in Korea instead of cutting down trees; Japan not unnaturally regarded this as "the seizure by the Russian dynasty of a portion of Korea," lost all confidence in the Tsar's sincerity, demanded that the "concession" should be abandoned, and upon a refusal to comply with these requests, commenced hostilities.

Nicholas was confounded; but in view of the Tsaritsa's condition he continued none the less to resort to spirits and table-turning. The shades of Napoleon and Frederick the Great were summoned, but, seeing the *impasse* and the peril of predictions, they wisely gave contrary opinions. Finally, Admiral Makaroff foundered with the armoured cruiser *Petropavlovsk*. The sacred icons on the vessel rose to the surface and were thrown up on the sea-shore, which was considered a good omen. An astute diver went down, and saw the lost crew standing at the bottom of the sea, whilst the Archimandrite said Mass, and the drowned Admiral made a patriotic speech! The Tsar had not heard this, but—he had summoned the spirit of the Admiral. Needless to say, the shade predicted ultimate victory, promised to rise up again with the armoured cruiser, to resume command of the Fleet, to occupy Tokio, and announced the arrival of a special messenger! On the same day Nicholas heard the story of the diver, and summoned the man before him to repeat it in person. Was it this coincidence?—or a movement of genuine suspicion?—or was it the total destruction of the Fleet which

Makaroff's soul had wished to convoy to Japan? In any case, the poor, impotent, omnipotent Autocrat declined to have any more to do with table-turners!

But at last, amid all his troubles, Nicholas saw a prospect of salvation. Two marvellous astrologers made their appearance for his diversion. Their vogue was still at its zenith in the beginning of 1905. It is owing to them that Nicholas has not abandoned the nominal despotism which cloaks the tyranny of the Bureaucracy, in face of the Revolutionary attacks. Think of the Tsar's good fortune: they proved by equations, logarithms, differential calculus, and other diabolical mathematical inventions, that the critical year for Nicholas II. would be—1912! But they did not bring forward the generous cheques of the reactionary Grand Dukes in evidence of their allegations.

The Government of Nicholas II.

Such childish and superstitious methods of looking upon the world and real events, such ignorance of everything that makes for the well-being of Men and States, are entirely incompatible with the right exercise of power. The influence of the Grand Dukes, of the two Empresses, and, above all, of the Bureaucratic caste that really governs the Empire, obviously tends to inhibit the intervention of the Sovereign in public affairs as much as possible. Now, since he is the only person qualified to orientate the administration of State Affairs, the effective regulation of the same must be reduced to a minimum; modifications must be forbidden, reforms must be looked on as more dangerous than anything else; the maintenance of the *statu quo ante* in all things —with its inevitable results of growing decay in the neglected organisation—must be the supreme aim of

those who hold the reins of State. The irresponsible powers of the subordinates must simultaneously develop in monstrous forms, the stagnation of public and private matters can but end in an *impasse*; in short, all initiative in whatever sphere of life must remain dormant under the double weight of uncertainty as to the future, and the arbitrary oppression of the executive. The actual state of things corresponds entirely with these theoretical deductions.

The principle of the *régime*—if lack of principle can form a system—which has oppressed the subjects of the Tsar for forty-five years, and has gradually developed since the abolition of serfdom, is fundamentally simple. M. Bieloff, a gentleman of good family and the Tsar's confidant, was appealed to last year by His Majesty as to the possibility of simplifying the vast jumble of *ukases*, *prikases*, *rasporiajenias*, *zakons*, and the other arbitrary decrees which take the place of laws in Russia. M. Bieloff readily enough gave the following ingenious solution of the question:

"All these laws," said he, "are more or less circumlocutions. Your Majesty should abolish them all, and replace them by a simple sentence, which would have exactly the same effect."

"What sentence?" demanded Nicholas II.

"Merely this: 'The Tsar's subjects are prohibited from working.'"

The Emperor laughed, but, unfortunately, did not follow the advice, which, however, contained the essence of the Russian troubles. This story is related by a person who was actually present during the conversation; and it is much to be regretted that the Tsar did not give his adviser an opportunity of explaining himself. An explanation would not only have shown the

Emperor the intolerable oppression which stifles the intellectual, economical, and moral life of his subjects, but would also have demonstrated his own impotence to oppose the Bureaucratic party, or to obtain ever so small a fraction of the power which is implied by his title of "Autocrat."

Subservience of Nicholas II.

Undoubtedly the Tsar himself is the first of the 130,000,000 Russians to whom "work is prohibited." Indeed, if we analyse the pathology of the dynasty as a whole, we see that autocracy has never been anything but a fiction since the famous "great reforms" which marked the reign of Alexander II. It is now common knowledge that the Tsar is separated from the nation, as from the outside world, by an impenetrable army of relatives and officials, who prevent him from getting the slightest reliable information about current events, and from taking any step that might prejudice either the person or the interests of his unscrupulous advisers. Beyond the Ministerial reports (which are the more mendacious from their irresponsibility, from the fact that no official relations exist between the Ministers, no one of whom will consult with his colleagues on any point, and that accordingly each draws up his reports to his own advantage and the detriment of his rivals), the Tsar receives for his information only carefully "doctored" printed extracts. The Russian citizen is the victim of a single Censor: Nicholas II. is the slave of three or four. A special office, called the "Department for the Publication of Journals," inaugurates the process of purging, and suppresses anything that might prove disagreeable to His Majesty, above all, everything that might influence his political decisions. The

"literary staff" of the Bureau next select and cut out all the passages that are "admissible," paste them on sheets, and pass them on to the Director, Nivé. The doubtful passages are by him submitted to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who suppresses or corrects them. Finally, they are typewritten, and offered to the inspection of the Censor, after which Nicholas, "the Aútocrat," is allowed to partake of this intellectual pabulum, which has been masticated no less than four distinct times by his gaolers—and it is seldom that the Tsar receives any other news. The Revolutionaries occasionally find the means to place their more important decisions or threats on his table; otherwise, for several years, there has existed but one channel through which the outer world has been able to place such books and pamphlets in the hands of the Autocrat as it wishes him to read before they are "edited" by the Bureaucracy; this medium of communication is his sister, the Grand Duchess Xenia. Needless to say, the very publications he ought to read do not reach him by this channel.

On the other hand, his theoretical freedom to rule the Empire is rendered worthless by certain stipulations made by his predecessors, which have been enforced by the official world in order to prevent his taking any initiative. No law, *ukase* or *prikase*, can be decided without the matter in question being first referred to a Minister; and the ukase has then to be ratified by the Senate. The "laws" have first to be discussed by the Council of the Empire, and are then promulgated by the Senate. All important matters have to be submitted to special Commissions, in which the officials elaborate schemes which the Tsar is obliged to ratify, since he has no power of independent conclusion. By a

curious irony, experts, professional men, and those directly interested are invariably excluded. Hence it is not surprising that the Russian legislation of to-day contains no laws relating to the condition of the people, still less to the "Divine right" of the Sovereign. This abuse of power has resulted in the extraordinary fact that, for several years, no one decision of any importance can be attributed to the personal initiative of the Tsar. The Tsar is obliged on all occasions to obey the suggestions of his relatives and his officials, who have arranged their line of action beforehand, so that the advice of any one endorses that of all the others with miraculous unanimity.

Needless to say, this is a fatal state of affairs both for the country and for the Tsar's personal prestige. The distressful situation is admirably illustrated by an incident which was subsequently, by a rare chance, revealed to the Tsar by the King of England, but which had by that time had the dire effect of launching Nicholas into the war with Japan. Since 1903 the reactionary party had solicited hostilities, but had been persistently opposed by Count Lamsdorff, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In order to rid himself of Lamsdorff, Plehve organised a service of diplomatic information independent of the Ambassadors in Paris, Berlin, and London. The activity of this questionable institution amounted to treason, and it misled the Tsar with the object of discrediting Lamsdorff. Shady individuals in London and Paris—notably a Serb named Veselitski, a Russian Anti-Semite, journalist, and informer—were bidden to forward mendacious reports on the international situation to Plehve, not Lamsdorff. They pretended, on the one hand, that the claims of Japan were in no way supported by England, and, on

the other, that France, in the event of a conflict, would not hesitate to intervene by arms in favour of Russia. Plehve intended to provoke a war between England and France in order to save Russia from a disaster at the last moment. But it temporarily sufficed to convince the Tsar that he had nothing to fear from England, and that, as the support of France was guaranteed him, he could with impunity reject the demands of Japan.

Lamsdorff, better informed by the Ambassadors, thought otherwise; but each time he submitted his diplomatic despatches to the Tsar, the latter already had on his table a contradictory report handed in by Plehve. Nicholas naïvely confessed that he received these reports through the intermediary of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch; the Tsar naturally thought that his brother-in-law was supported by his sister, and Lamsdorff's position was not a little shaken. Happily, in spite of the conspirators, he justified himself by throwing the responsibility of his "errors" on his Ambassadors! Then, when the War was at its height, Count Benckendorff, the English Ambassador, came from London with a letter from Edward VII., which enlightened the Tsar as to the whole abominable intrigue. This was the immediate cause of the disgrace of the Viceroy Alexeieff, who had conceived the entire business. But the disaster it had engendered—the Russo-Japanese War—took its course none the less!

On rare occasions the Ministers arrive at a decision without a series of preliminary intrigues. One of these few exceptional cases was the settlement of the Anglo-Russian incident provoked by the outrage on the Hull fisher-fleet. On this occasion an abominable fabrication of lies by the military party almost succeeded in representing the event as provoked by the English.

For four days the Ministry of Marine refused to communicate the official telegraphic reports to Count Lamsdorff, the friend of peace. He succeeded, however, in obtaining a report direct from London an hour before the sitting of the Council which was to decide the attitude to be taken. This stated that the reports from the Admiralty had been altered so as to influence the Tsar; Lamsdorff insisted on his information, showed that England desired to maintain peace, and threw the ranks of the intriguers into utter confusion. The Tsar, pale and agitated—either from grief or anger—and possibly recalling the Benckendorff Affair, supported Lamsdorff, and said, "The matter must be settled by arbitration. M. Lamsdorff will draw up a report immediately." He then dismissed the Council and retired hurriedly.

On the other hand, there are numerous instances in which the Bureaucracy has gone directly contrary to the will and promises of the Tsar, who has subsequently been obliged, in the interests of his moral prestige, to ratify measures which he would otherwise have condemned. One example out of a thousand may be cited—the nomination of General Sakharoff to the post of Minister of War. The original Minister of War, Kuropatkin, had, as we shall see, been hindered in his preparations for the War. Disorganisation reigned supreme, but the General's fame was still paramount. After the first disasters, Plehve's party urged the Tsar to appoint Kuropatkin to the command—really in the hope that it would lead to his downfall. The Tsar assented with pleasure, but Kuropatkin refused the post, and, at the first alarm, took refuge with his mother in a village in the Pskof Government, where no dispatches could reach him. Here he held out for a week, but at last, in obedience to the Tsar's orders, accepted the command,

on the condition that he should remain nominally Minister of War, to avoid any subordination to a superior who, if he belonged to the reactionaries, would inevitably complicate the situation. Kuropatkin well knew what awaited him, and said to one friend, "I shall arrive yonder like Wimpffen at Sedan"; and to another, "They are sending me to the front to get rid of me; I shall be powerless."

Scarcely had he left when Sakharoff, the chief of the conspirators, was appointed War Minister: the plot had succeeded!

A few days after the departure of Kuropatkin, General Sakharoff, Chief of Staff, signed several decrees as "Minister of War," and the Tsar was so entirely under the thumb of the reactionary group that he was obliged to ratify the nomination of Sakharoff, in the belief that the whole nation already looked upon him as duly appointed, although, as a matter of fact, nobody—except the few people in the plot—was aware of the swindle that had been perpetrated.

Under these circumstances, it is not very paradoxical to imagine that, if he but fully realised the *rôle* he is made to play, the Tsar would personally support those of the Revolutionary party who desire the establishment of a Constitutional Monarchy and the destruction of the Bureaucratic Caste.

Nicholas the Megalomaniac.

Unfortunately, the Tsar has no inkling that he is being duped. The idea of "Divine right," which Pobiedonostseff had inculcated in him, and which is in reality the only thing that enables him to consider his *rôle* as bearable, dominates him so that even in his periods of complete abulia he does not cease to believe

himself the source from which every act of government emanates. Even in those moods in which he passionately insists on being left alone, his feeling of responsibility appears to be uppermost, and there are numerous cases on record in which after literally showing Ministers, who had come to talk with him on grave matters of State, to the door, he has immediately shut himself up to study the documents in question. The omniscience of which he believes himself the accredited holder urges him into a mania for marginal interpolations, in which form he annotates all the papers he peruses. His faith in the illimitable efficacy of these annotations is absolute, and the official legislation indeed demands that they be obeyed as far as possible. This is the more dangerous for the country, since these orders are generally given without any previous discussion—that is to say, they are usually the result of the specious arguments of an interested Minister, who cunningly escapes Imperial criticism—or they are written in moods of ill-temper and caprice, when some association of exaggerated ideas or vague impressions warps the naturally stunted judgment of the Sovereign. As in such moments he exaggerates rather than minimises his enormous responsibility, it is these uncontrolled acts that give the true measure of the mentality of Nicholas II. And they show that, apart from the crooked and fraudulent decisions imposed upon him by unscrupulous Ministers, and for which he is not wholly responsible, Nicholas II. has a shocking tendency to make himself the willing accomplice of the worst shortcomings of his officials,—as, for example, in the horrible persecution of the Jews.

In 1903, Witte forced himself on Nicholas at Darmstadt, and explained to him the iniquitous consequences

of Plehve's Anti-Semitic policy. The latter, seeing his prestige in danger, and possibly tired of being compared by the civilised world to Torquemada, Abdul Hamid, or Timûr, justified himself, like a traitor turned king's evidence, by publishing a small pamphlet in his own defence. Plehve's 1902 scheme, the object of which was still further to limit the domiciliary rights of the Jews in Siberia, carries the following note in the Emperor's handwriting:—"The Jews who quit their legal zone of residence annually inundate entire districts of Siberia with their disgusting presence. This intolerable nuisance must be put a stop to."

Then Nicholas II. accepts Plehve's dictum: "A third of the Jews will be converted, another third will emigrate, the rest—will perish?"

It was *he* who imprisoned the Jews in their ghettos, to murder them by hunger and typhoid! It was *he* who reduced 63 per cent. of the Jewish families to absolute indigence! It was *he* who allowed Jewish prostitutes only to leave their quarters, and who imprisoned or exiled them whenever the police reported that these unhappy women had worked, or had courted the stigma of shame solely in order to acquire a right of living where they were!

In these acts of sovereign initiative, a childish ignorance of facts is mingled with their odium. The cynicism which constantly manifests itself in the dim light of Nicholas' study during his hours "of solitary reflection" shows better than anything else of what this man would be capable if he were not in the majority of cases reduced to passive obedience to his *entourage*. Of this we have many examples.

Here is one worthy of being cited, since it shows, besides his cynicism, the measure of the insolence of

the Bureaucracy in face of his impotence, changing into abject flattery when their Sovereign follows his caprices.

It concerns the nomination of General Kleigels to the post of Governor-General of Kieff in 1903. This abominable personage was Prefect of the St. Petersburg Police, and in that character presided over the Tsar's safety. He achieved a world-wide reputation by the deliberate murder of sixty-two students, slaughtered before his eyes on the Nevskii Prospekt in the course of a pacific University manifestation—for which deed he received warm personal congratulations from the idealist Nicholas.

In 1902, Kleigels embezzled the whole of the funds placed to the credit of the Fire Brigade of St. Petersburg. Lopoukine, a creature of Plehve, who was Public Prosecutor at that time, informed the Senate, a kind of High Court, at the instigation of Plehve (who was always anxious to get rid of a powerful man), of Kleigels' dishonesty, but the Imperial Cabinet put a stop to the prosecution, and Lopoukine was recalled on account, it was said, of a certain "*indelicacy* in the fulfilment of his duties." Six months later Plehve created him Chief of the Political Police, a position which he occupied till March, 1905, when he became Governor of Esthonia.

He allied himself with one of Kleigels' subordinates, who supplied him with a complete and irrefutable list of the thefts and peculations of his chief. Plehve handed the Tsar a detailed report of Kleigels' roguery, but the Autocrat would not listen to him, retained the documents, and sent the Minister about his business. Fifteen days later, the Tsar returned the papers to him without a word, and Plehve was surprised to read on the first page the admirable sentiment, "I am indebted to Kleigels.—Nicholas."

Three days later, Plehve, having exiled the official who furnished him with the documents in question, without trial, as a Revolutionary, proposed the nomination of Kleigels, in a eulogistic report, for the eligible position of Governor-General of Kieff, to which he was immediately appointed.

The Reign of Terror.

The association of Nicholas II. with so compromised a man at first sight appears almost incredible, but the thing is easily explained by the state of abject terror in which he lives, as well as by the fact that the Tsar always believes himself to be the chief object of Nihilist persecution. As a matter of fact his insignificance has hitherto protected him for a longer time than his soldiers could have done, for there can be no doubt that his death would greatly hamper a revolution. Even when Plehve had been eliminated (July, 1904), the Terrorists informed him that he was not condemned to death, and this decree was only rescinded subsequently to the massacre at St. Petersburg, January 22, 1905. His constant terror has nevertheless increased steadily by reason of his megalomania since the Hague Conference, in which he posed as a sort of Messiah, whereas in reality he was merely contracting for loans on easy terms. From that moment he has imagined that all the powers of darkness are in coalition against him as the most important individual in the world. Finding that no serious attempt was made on his life at that period he began to suspect that the police were not sufficiently vigilant, and consequently dismissed the Prefect of Police. Kleigels, his successor, worked to better effect. With the assistance of his spies he concocted threatening letters, which he "intercepted" and presented to Nicholas. He also "discovered" certain sinister Terrorist

proclamations written in blood on black paper—one of which forgeries was found in Lopoukine's portfolio by the Tsar himself. One day he caused a couple of rails between St. Petersburg and Tsarskoe Selo to be taken up, and notified His Majesty of his peril five minutes before his departure from St. Petersburg: Nicholas wept for joy at the vigilance of his preserver! Kleigels forthwith set to work with enthusiasm to play the game of "saving" the Tsar's life at least once a week, and His Majesty, confident of the genuineness of the plots against his existence, loaded the Chief of Police with presents and honours. Eventually he conceived the grand idea of organising a tragi-comedy at Tsarskoe Selo, in imitation of the monstrous attempt which, in the reign of Alexander II., had destroyed an entire storey of the Winter Palace. The history of this "attempt" is little known. Kleigels undermined the Commemorative Church at Tsarskoe Selo, made ominous excavations in the pillars, and constructed a web of electric wires along the walls and beneath the Emperor's throne, under which he buried a biscuit tin! On the eve of a great commemorative ceremony in honour of Alexander III., which was to have taken place in the chapel, he denounced this "infernal plot" with consummate audacity to the Autocrat: Nicholas fainted, and henceforth regarded Kleigels as the greatest man in Russia.

These vagaries of Nicholas have to a large extent contributed to discredit his rule in the country, and to destroy in the popular mind the old-fashioned idea of the moral irresponsibility of the Tsar for the misdeeds of the Bureaucrats who act in his name. The extraordinary obsessions which master him directly he is free of his interlocutors have filled the Imperial brain with a sense of aggrieved obstinacy, whilst even irrefut-

able proofs that he is in the wrong produce no effect upon him. The unhealthy omniscience with which he suggestionises himself doubtless prevents him from being able to see things in their proper light. The reign of Nicholas is, therefore, a combination of two disastrous evils: in the first place, the wall which separates him from the nation sets him beyond the reach of any clear comprehension of the very things which he is supposed to manage; in the second, if he placed himself above the influences of his *entourage*, his obtuseness would lead him into other faults the more disastrous since his megalomania prevents him from remedying his mistakes on any consideration whatever.

His obstinacy is, no doubt, mainly caused by fear of the Revolutionaries, which has led him to cover the most criminal acts of his officials with the mantle of supreme authority. An amusing instance of this state of affairs appears in the Homeric struggle which took place between Kleigels and his famous predecessor in the post of Governor-General of Kieff, General Dragomiroff, who had the insolence to jeer at the Tsar's terrors and the grotesque manœuvres of his Chief of Police. At the time when Kleigels was massacring the students of St. Petersburg, the Kieff students were also organising a manifestation. The Governor of the town, General Cherkoff, asked Dragomiroff for troops in order to "repress the revolt." The latter refused. Cherkoff immediately telegraphed to his friend Kleigels, who hastened to the Tsar and explained that Kieff was running with blood and fire, and that Dragomiroff refused to call out his troops. The Tsar at once gave Dragomiroff a formal order to intervene with "the troops which he had at his disposal." Thereupon, the old wag sounded the alarm at midnight in all the barracks of the

district. By the morning Kieff had become a military camp; the artillery blocked the principal streets, and masses of infantry filled the centre of the town. By 11 A.M. the frightened inhabitants found themselves in the midst of an army of 45,000 men! Dragomiroff, in a carriage, appeared on the scene, and was cheered by everybody, students included. Passing quietly in front of the troops he dismissed them, and on his return despatched the following message to the Tsar: "I concentrated my troops. I did not meet the enemy. I have dismissed my troops. Cost: 140,000 roubles.—Dragomiroff." Both the Tsar and Kleigels were furious, and Dragomiroff was ordered to St. Petersburg, where he was received at the railway station by Kleigels, who had just perpetrated his massacres. Dragomiroff accosted him thus: "Kleigels, I am your superior. It is your duty to receive me in full uniform." "But I *have* got it on," replied the other, humbly. "You scoundrel!" shouted the old soldier, "you have forgotten the most essential part of it, your knout!"

That same evening there was a violent scene between Dragomiroff and the Tsar, who accused him of not having protected him. The General left in a rage. "One cannot protect anyone who is scared at everything and frightened without a cause," were his last words. With this he returned quietly to Kieff. Nicholas dared not proceed openly against him on account of his immense popularity, but he always retained a deep grudge against the General, and seized an early opportunity of placing the garrison at Kieff under the direct command of Cherkoff.

NICHOLAS II. AND THE MALVERSATION OF FUNDS.

With such a temperament, it is not, after all, remarkable that Nicholas II. should often have fallen into the traps prepared for him by interested officials: Plehve especially was a past-master in the art of "dishing" the Tsar. One of the most ludicrous cases of this kind occurred at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, and it is the more interesting as it shows that the Bureaucratic caste would rather see the Tsar convinced of the hatred of his people than of their affection, and moreover does not hesitate, if necessary, to suppress the slightest Liberal tendency on the part of the Sovereign, by throwing him into a state of dire nervous terror.

A confidant of Nicholas—the same who considers that Russian legislation should consist entirely in the prohibition of all kinds of labour—had obtained an Imperial order concerning a slight change in the Censorship. Plehve desired to make out that this was the commencement of the Revolution: and succeeded in doing so. He had already organised some "patriotic manifestations" at St. Petersburg after the attack on Port Arthur, and had even announced to the Tsar that the students were coming to cheer him in front of the Winter Palace; to which effect he had distributed seven hundred students' uniforms to his agents. (In Russia everybody, students, professors, doctors, engineers, in fact, every person, is compelled to wear a uniform, the better to be watched by the police.) He was thus able to turn this organised "patriotic manifestation" into a "Revolutionary manifestation": the "students" cried, "Long live the liberty of the Press!" and when they arrived at the Square, in front of the Palace, Plehve dispersed them by a brigade of

gendarmes. On the same day he reported the matter to the Tsar, showing that even the slightest promise of reform caused the youths to lose all feeling of patriotism, to replace it by subversive ideas. He thus induced the Tsar to abrogate his previous order.

By the aid of an interminable series of mystifications and machinations previously planned by the interested parties, and of "proofs" skilfully arranged to show the Tsar that the Bureaucratic clique allied with the Grand Dukes are alone to be trusted, Nicholas has succeeded, with the aid of his obstinate megalomaniacal "martyrdom," in glossing over all abuses, and all peculations underlying this *régime*, and in actually screening the culprits under the pretext that the victims are attacking established order. It is true that he is seldom called upon to judge the abominations committed in his name; there are, however, some few examples even of this. The general result may be gathered from the following occurrence.

Some years ago a question arose as to the advisability of entrusting the Director of one of the largest Financial Associations of Russia with the management of the Imperial Bank. The Tsar sent for this functionary. The financier respectfully pointed out that his present income was twice that to be derived from the post which had been offered to him.

"But I think that there are some secondary fees and subsidies," said the Tsar.

"That is all very well for those who prefer gratuities to the interests of the State, but I am too old for that."

The Tsar was stupefied at first, and then became furious.

"And you will not do what everybody else does? *Dourak! Pachol!* Idiot!—Away with you!"

In other words this shows that the Tsar considers extortion and robbery on the part of the high Bureaucracy to be a prerogative of the aristocracy; and explains many things. One only wonders that, as the principle is so clearly established, Nicholas should, on two or three occasions, have found himself obliged to disavow it. In these cases, however, it was a matter of foreign pressure. This notably occurred with certain extensive frauds committed by Trepoff, the Governor of Moscow, in complicity with his relative the Grand Duke Serge, the Governor-General, against an important English firm of manufacturers. This affair, at the same time, gives us some notion of how these personages—who will be portrayed below—imagined they were going to exterminate Socialism.

As the Director of the Artisans' Syndicates, which had been founded by Zubatoff for the purpose of keeping a watch on the Socialists, he had introduced spies amongst the workmen in the principal factories. The English manufacturer above-mentioned spotted the trick, and turned the wolves out of the fold. Trepoff immediately threatened him with a general strike if he did not re-engage them; but the Englishman held firm, and even refused to receive a delegation of "workmen" sent by Trepoff. Hence the celebrated strike of 1902. Trepoff then threatened to close the factory and to expel the manufacturer—a threat which, by-the-bye, he refused to repeat in writing. The Englishman, suspecting the truth, then received the delegates, who, before entering on the industrial situation, demanded a payment of no less than 100,000 roubles (about £10,000)! With the proofs of the fraud in his hands, the manufacturer, at nine o'clock in the evening, took the express train for Petersburg. Trepoff followed him at eleven o'clock

in the express, but arrived an hour later. The Englishman profited by the start to hasten to the Ministry accompanied by his Ambassador, and Trepoff, as may well be imagined, got the reverse of an agreeable reception from his superiors. The Tsar gave vent to his indignation, and this past-master of fraud had to apologise to the manufacturer. The strike, however, lasted another month without any other result than that of impoverishing thousands of workmen and injuring the industry of Moscow for two years.

England has brought no luck to Trepoff or the Tsar; she forced a second exposure of Trepoff, under still more serious conditions. What would Nicholas not have given for this affair to have been the work of a Russian, or, at least, of a submissive French friend and ally! Fear, the eternal fear of revolution and of violent death, has played sad havoc with Trepoff and his master.

The dreadful fate which he expected would overwhelm him, as a just retribution, made him the terror of Moscow. It is impossible to give even an approximate estimate of the number of victims run over by his carriage, as he drove at top speed through the most frequented streets. One day, however, a cab got in his way. Beside himself at such audacity, Trepoff swore at and assaulted the passenger, who did not understand a word of Russian. At the police-station to which he was dragged, it was found that this gentleman was nothing less than an English duke, a relative of the Queen! Is it necessary to add that, after an exchange of despatches with the Tsar, Trepoff presented himself next day in full uniform to offer his humblest apologies to His Grace?

A third case in which Nicholas reluctantly denounced the peculators, is connected with the same group of

Moscow scoundrels, the Grand Duke Serge, Trepoff, and Buliguine, Civil Governor, who was made Minister of the Interior in January, 1905, after the massacres of Petersburg. This triad had the bad luck to get entangled with foreign Governments. The matter in question, which had a great deal to do with the recall of Serge in 1904, concerned the Post Office. For some time past, enormous quantities of registered letters had disappeared; innumerable complaints poured in from all sides, those coming from Russia being invariably thrown into the waste-paper basket. The great mistake was that the same was done with those from the subjects of two great democracies which are not subject to Tsardom. These countries, since their complaints bore no fruit, sought for diplomatic redress, and as their Embassies represented their countries and not Tsardom (as sometimes happens), they gave the Government of Nicholas considerable trouble. An official was sent to Moscow, and charged to overhaul the inventory of documents kept at the Post Office: this official was a dunderhead. Instead of taking his instructions (and his pay) from Serge, Trepoff, and Buliguine, he accomplished his mission, and found several thousands of Post Office orders and other valuables duly endorsed, not by the parties for whom they were intended, but, fraudulently, by the high officials of Moscow. The sums which had been thus appropriated amounted to more than two million roubles. It was decided that St. Petersburg should repay the foreigners, and the Tsar was so furious that for once he did not dismiss honest officials, but showed his good faith by punishing the Muscovite trio. This was merely an act of international deference, since his megalomania extends only to the borders of the Russian Empire, and

European opinion scares him: hence his fourfold censure. Hence, also, the terror of one of the aides-de-camp, who one day (August, 1904) returned to his house trembling and nearly out of his mind, and related to his wife the scene which he had witnessed. Entering the Tsar's study, he saw him, pale, pointing to something on his table, and commanding him to summon General Hesse, the Superintendent of the Palace. This was at Peterhof. What was it? A bomb? No! something far worse! Copies of the *Vorwärts* of Berlin, the *Aurore* of Paris, and the *Tribune Russe* had been placed before him by criminal hands! After reading the remarks on the death of Plehve the Tsar burst into tears, and the palace was turned upside down. . . .

Nicholas has never troubled himself as to inter-Russian peculations. Nevertheless, there are instances enough to force any man of sound mind to inflict punishment; but his fears deter him. We will mention only one instance to give an idea of the Tsar's opinion of "patriotic theft." It was at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. Kuropatkin, on arriving in Manchuria, peremptorily demanded thirty-six mountain guns which he had on his lists but not in his possession. It was known that Creuzot had delivered at least twelve of them a short time before. Where were they? They were demanded of General Altvater, second Chief of Staff at St. Petersburg. Of course he "knew nothing," but sent a bullet, not through his head, but through the ceiling of his office. This saved him in all senses. He admitted that the guns existed, but stated that, being in need of money, he had sent them to Warsaw, where they had been "put up the spout" with a dealer in metals. The Tsar caused the notice of the attempted suicide to be disclaimed, so as not to render his army ridiculous at the

beginning of the war, pensioned the worthy general, redeemed the guns, and sent them to Manchuria at the very moment when Kuropatkin for want of these mountain-guns suffered irreparable defeat on the Yalu and Ouafan-Ku.

THE IRRESPONSIBLE AUTOCRAT.

Nicholas has thus lent himself to innumerable pitiful comedies, under circumstances which, if they do not prove a desire to do harm, justify us at least in doubting his good faith. Let us place his obstinacy, his accesses of energy, and his periods of unreasonable sentimentality to the account of his pathological mental condition. Let us attribute to the same cause the extraordinary manifestations of "favour" promulgated on the occasion of the birth of his son, in which he proclaimed amnesty for crimes of opinion dating back more than fifteen years, and... no longer to be traced; in which he invited political refugees "to return to their homes"—that is, since those unhappy wights had been condemned to deportation without judgment, they were to offer themselves for transportation to Siberia; while he caused arrears of taxes amounting to £24,000,000 to be remitted to the peasants, which it had been impossible to collect because . . . the peasant for many years has had absolutely nothing to give the tax collectors.

The Tsar who hopes to make himself beloved by his people by such lucubrations,—the Tsar who, at the same time, is transfixed with his unreasonable fear of assassination, which also is becoming more and more probable,—the Tsar who believes himself to be omniscient, who is "infallible in his acts," and who, for that reason, seeks the blind confidence of his people,—this same Tsar has

never had the courage to show his confidence in his people from the moment when, with tearful pride, he promised a "policy of confidence." For years past he has never left the Winter Palace by the door at which he is expected. A group of Court equipages drawn up outside one of the numerous entrances to the Palace forms a counter-attraction for the people, and enables his Majesty. to drive away secretly from a side-door. The picture is familiar. We all know that "the modesty of Nicholas II. is proverbial"!

All this may be the unhappy product of moral irresponsibility due to pathological causes. Historical progress, nevertheless, takes no account of the dementia of a Nero or a Caligula, but only of the too tangible results of his demeanour as a monarch. It will be the same with Nicholas. If he were logical he would become a Revolutionary; but this is impossible, for the simple reason that his warped brain does not permit him to see things in their true proportion. And even if he could, the result would be the same, for he is surrounded by an impenetrable barrier which dominates him; his Grand Ducal relations and their party terrorise him, exploit him, annihilate him, and would not hesitate to bring about his death if he signed a single Liberal Act which might injure their power or diminish their revenues. Influenced by their own material interests, these relatives constitute the stronghold of the Counter-Revolution, and they would combat enfranchisement with even greater energy if only they were more logical. Nicholas—the man—is deserving of pity. It is his political *rôle* alone that is iniquitous. His relatives, the Grand Dukes—politically non-existent in the presence of the Tsar, who is alone responsible—are mere individuals . . . and as such their conduct is scandalous.

THE GRAND DUKES.

The group of persons related to the Tsar—the Grand Ducal clique—suffer, one and all, from a malady peculiar to Russia and to the Holstein-Gottorp dynasty. An abundant progeny in one or several generations of monarchs is a source of weakness and trouble to all dynasties. When a Court is encumbered with a number of idle Royalties, the Head of the Dynasty is at a loss how to utilise or to provide for them—a state of affairs which gives rise to regrettable rivalries; the Royal revenues are divided up amongst a number of people, each of whom considers himself to be more or less at a disadvantage. The total number of irresponsible councillors eventually becomes a public danger. Guided, not by considerations of policy, but solely by family interests, their influence in affairs of State is characterised by increasing efforts to exploit the State for their own political welfare, to keep the nation alive solely for the purpose of supporting the Court and exalting the power of the Monarch, and to induce the latter to commit acts in favour of their own material and social advantage, to the detriment of the people. The Head of the Dynasty falls more and more under the influence of these family advisers, whom he cannot discard without damaging his own prestige. His moral character and independence naturally deteriorate, since on one point at least the relatives, who live at his expense, are all agreed: their common interests keep the Monarch from his people, and as much as possible in their own hands. This they can only do by persuading him that they, and they alone, are the true champions of Imperial power.

The results of this system are well illustrated, among many other historical examples, in the downfall of the all-

powerful Dynasty of Genghiz Khan, whose swift and absolute decay stands as the prototype of all similar dynastic tragedies. Even there, however, the "household *régime*" was far less grievous than it is with the Holstein-Gottorps of to-day. Here the Grand Ducal *régime* is no longer exercised by capable soldiers or prudent politicians in the legitimate interests of the Crown, but by a set of degenerates who try to make a pretext of the military or political interests of the Tsar in order to insure themselves the material and moral means of gratifying their disreputable passions.

In reality, all these Tsars *in partibus*—handicapped by their Royal birth—have, with their following of relatives, personal friends, sycophants, and servants, for nearly half a century been in an utterly false position. At the very time when their number had given them an astonishing importance, the famous reforms of Alexander II. deprived them of the possibility of installing themselves as officials in the most important administrative posts of the Empire.

They were, in a measure, crushed between the power of the Monarch and that of the Bureaucratic Party, whose various phases are described below. The advent of this party practically put them in the shade. Their ranks, moreover, were increased by their numerous progeny, while the Bureaucracy managed to amass enormous powers, which were irresistible, imperceptible, but too real not to paralyse the family influence they were constantly trying to impose upon the Sovereign. Under these conditions, their anxiety for the preservation of their power could not but impel them into a course which is perhaps without parallel in history. They were forced to come to a tacit understanding with the Bureaucracy, and if they could not control it, they could,

at all events, profit by their unfettered power to fill the office of benevolent intermediaries between the office-holders—whose official functions alone put them into immediate contact with the Tsar—and the latter himself, who, in private life, is accessible to the advice and the intrigues of his relatives.

Leaders of Rank and File.

The following chapter will furnish the details of this alliance between the Grand Dukes and the Bureaucracy. The results of this hybrid association in regard to the Dynasty and to Tsardom belong, strictly speaking, to the history of the decay of the dynasty. Given the triple necessities of the Grand Dukes to vindicate the autocracy of the Tsar, which is their sole guarantee for their own prestige and revenues, to uphold the Bureaucracy which retains the administrative power for practical purposes, and to defend themselves against the ill-humour of the first and the arrogance of the second, their policy of action must, theoretically, proceed from three very simple principles. These are: to intrigue against the Tsar, to terrorise the Bureaucracy by exploiting their own influence with the Autocrat, and to manipulate the idiosyncrasies of the one party or the other—thus implying complicity with the crimes of the officials, and a kind of prætorian insolence towards the sovereign. This general characterisation of the Grand Dukes is absolutely borne out by the reality.

The Grand Ducal party consists, in 1905, of a number of more or less distant relatives of the Tsar, amounting (women and children included) to more than a hundred persons, who are, in their turn, surrounded by several thousand individuals, courtiers, sycophants, men of

business, and favourites, who, without being actually seated around the groaning board of the Bureaucracy, live entirely at its expense, and go as much by their number as by their social position to make up a veritable bodyguard to the party, with orders to play the part of "the loyal 'nation,'" before the Sovereign, of "dynastic authority" before the people. It is for the rest only the heads of this group who are worthy of interest. The rank and file may be passed by in silence—the more so as their moral and physical blemishes, bequeathed to them by the chiefs of the dynasty, forbid any decent person to inquire into their private lives. The leading personages, on the contrary, cannot invoke this privilege, since their peccadillos are of national importance, and in last resort it is in order to gratify their morbid cravings that they terrorise both Tsar and people.

These persons number a dozen at most; and the worst offenders, as is to be expected in a country like Russia where the superannuated notion of the patriarch survives, are just those who have known how to avail themselves of the respect due to age, and the prestige appertaining to a former generation. This was particularly easy with a young monarch who came to the throne at a time when his father's generation was still in the prime of life. And Nicholas was the more embarrassed inasmuch as his grandfather Alexander II. and his great-uncle Michael have been remarkably prolific. Nicholas II. has a considerable number of uncles, and in addition to their personal ascendency over him they can domineer over their nephew by constituting themselves interpreters of the views and ideas of the two preceding Emperors, whose political will and testament they pretend to possess.

Despite the jealousies and dissensions which obtain within this avuncular oligarchy, they are united in

their efforts to hold the Tsar in the bondage of a reactionary policy, and that for two reasons. Autocracy alone enables them to apportion the finances of the State, and of these they stand in need, since their mode of life does not admit of their living upon the few millions a year which the Tsar allows them out of the royal appanages. On the other hand, Autocracy alone protects them from the attacks of the Nation, by elevating them above the laws of the ordinary community. By this fact they are practically irresponsible, even in matters of common law, while absolute impunity is assured to them, since the Tsar alone—in virtue of an ancient patriarchal law imported into Russia by the Mongols—has the right to reprimand or punish them.

The choicest official positions are occupied by half-a-dozen of these uncles, whose names are appended in the order of their importance—Vladimir, Serge, Alexis (all three sons of Alexander II.), Alexander Mikhailovitch and Nicholas Nikolaievitch. The least significant is of course Constantine Constantinovitch, the only Grand Duke whose intellectual culture is above the average, who is a poet of distinction, a judge and patron of the fine arts, and who keeps pace with European ideas.

SERGE.

One of the leaders of the *clique* has ceased to exercise his dire influence and his criminal activity, in consequence of a terrorist outrage in February, 1905. Serge was struck down at the very moment in which he had virtually taken the reins of power out of the feeble hands of Nicholas. He was sapped by the tuberculosis which in its latent period had manifested the entire psychosis characteristic of this disease, intermittent euphoria and megalomania, a total absence of moral

sense, exaggerated erotomania and various superstitions. He had succeeded in marrying his wife's sister to the Tsar, Nicholas, and was the more intimate with the Autocrat, inasmuch as the disparity of age between them was inconsiderable. He accordingly reaped a harvest of vast estates, exclusive appanages, and a multiplicity of handsome sinecures with their corresponding perquisites. His annual income exceeded £320,000. As, however, he showed the mania for dissipation common to all his family, and the gratification of his lusts cost him incredible sums, he was perpetually in pecuniary difficulties, and did not hesitate to become a party to bureaucratic peculation, which he was supposed to repress by his authority. His two most notable malversations, with the exception of the postal thefts at Moscow, relate to the period prior to his recall from the position of Governor-General of Moscow.

In the Morozoff scandal he had the impudence to summon this multi-millionaire and other Moscow manufacturers to his house, for the purpose of ordering them to subscribe more generously to the Red Cross and other war funds. Morozoff declared his readiness to spend considerable sums on condition that he himself took part in their administration, "to make sure that his donations were employed for the patriotic objects indicated." Serge was at the head of this administrative committee.

"What do you mean by such language?" shouted Serge.

"I mean that the funds already subscribed have not been utilised as I was given to understand they would be."

"You are an insolent liar!"

"I can prove to your Imperial Highness, that I have already given articles of clothing, made in my own factories, to the value of a million roubles, and that I

could have bought them back half-price in the shops at Moscow."

"Infamous scoundrel! If you don't apologise, I will have you arrested and sent over the frontier!"

"I have nothing to apologise for, and I am ready to go; but of course I shall close my works, and discharge my workmen."

"You be d——'

The conversation, reported in this form by someone who was present, had further consequences. Morozoff telegraphed to the Minister of Finance, who informed the Tsar. Had the 65,000 workmen been discharged for such a reason it would obviously have created a disaster. Morozoff remained: it was Serge who left Moscow a month later.

His departure was also due to a more delicate affair. Serge refused the renewal of a license to a lady who conducted perfectly respectable dancing classes, which were attended by young girls of good family. The establishment was in a flourishing condition. Serge, incited by his erotic mania and lust for money-making, invited the lady in question to arrange "assignations" for him with some of the prettiest of her pupils. As she indignantly refused to have any dealings of this nature, he tried to blackmail her and demanded a large sum under the threat of accusing her of being a procuress. She still refused. The license was withdrawn and this gave her the opportunity of explaining the affair to some of the members of the aristocracy, who conveyed the story to St. Petersburg. The Tsar was furiously angry, and this was Serge's last act of blackmail.

Sadism, along with money, was his ruling passion and from his youth up this vice had preyed upon him. The commencement of his official career was marked by an especially reprehensible display of his passions.

Under the title of "Inspector of the Institutions of Mary," a kind of Comptroller of the Imperial Orphanages, he "inspected" one of these houses,—where the orphan girls of the bureaucracy are brought up at the expense of the State,—to such purpose that a girl of good family had to complain of the heinous crime which the brother of the Tsar (then Alexander III.) had perpetrated on her. His instant dismissal became obligatory; but, as he was both a coward and a sneak, he refused to fight a young officer who was related to the victim, and he was sent to travel abroad!

In Palestine he developed his religious tendencies in the form of ridiculous superstitions, combined with a furious Anti-Semitism.

He returned more than ever the ardent disciple of Pobiedonostseff, and applied himself, as soon as he was appointed to Moscow, to putting all his theories into practice. He founded and conducted a Society for Pilgrimage to Palestine, the treasury of which, being richly endowed by donations of a somewhat compulsory nature, enabled a few peasants to be sent annually to the holy places, and also, incidentally, filled up the great breaches in the Grand Ducal exchequer. At the same time he purged the Orthodox Holy City of the assassins of Christ. He next extorted several hundred thousand roubles from certain rich Jews who were affected by his laws of expulsion.

To one of their deputations he declared that "all Jews ought to be crucified," but he was open to accept money, and subsequently expelled only those who could not advance him large sums without receipt. In connection with the law of expulsion, however, he introduced two highly characteristic exceptions.

One was in reference to young Jewish girls. These are

only admitted to live in Moscow if they inscribe their names on the registers of prostitutes, and this involves medical visits, along with frequent affronts, from so-called "doctors" and "inspectors." His Highness sometimes deigned,—in the interests of good government,—to assist in these private visitations. The other exception referred to little Jewish boys employed as apprentices or as grooms. All other classes of Jew being useless at the residence of the Tsar's uncle, it was a matter of course that they should be driven back to their Ghettos in the south-west of Russia.

The same occurred with the workwomen and female students, who solicited the title of "unfortunates," in order that they might gain their living in Moscow, or be allowed to work!

Whenever it was proved that a Jewess was not a professional prostitute, she was expelled,—more often, undoubtedly, after she had been outraged. One of these cases was published, thanks to the deposition of a police-officer, who corroborated the statement of the victim, a saleswoman in a little town in Podolia. Accosted by a secret agent in the street and refusing to follow him, she was arrested, and subjected to an examination. She was virgin. They locked her up. Next day she was flogged, violated by the gendarmes, and expelled. Her master, a very influential merchant, lodged a complaint. The affair went against the police-officer implicated. Upon that, he declared that after his report he had called on the Grand Duke, who said to him that "if she were still virgin, which was against the law, his men would do well to apply the regulation for this case," so that he had only acted under instructions.

The political position of the man, under these conditions, is incredible. Nicholas could not have been

unacquainted with all his personal qualities. It is the more inexplicable since his incapacity for governing was phenomenal. The arrangements that he had made at the time of the fêtes during the coronation of Nicholas II. led to the deaths of 8,000 persons on the field of Khodinskoe. Under his administration the suburbs of Moscow became the scenes of untold crimes; and the use he made of the funds placed at his commands calls for no comment.

None the less it is to him that Russia owes the dire rule of Plehve which has precipitated the present Revolutionary movement. It was he who, counter to everyone's advice, including that of the omnipotent Pobiedonostseff, forced the Tsar to appoint Plehve as Minister of the Interior in succession to Sipiaguine, who met his death from a revolver.

Nothing in this connection is more interesting than the following conversation between the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, wife of the Grand Duke Serge, and a celebrated English authoress, who used to visit her. The conversation turned on the causes which decided the appointment of Plehve.

"I do not wish to see Plehve, who is a police officer appointed, but I suppose he will be."

"But why? I believe an autonomy of Zemstvos is all that is wanted."

"Quite so, all of us in the Imperial Family are convinced that reforms, and even a Constitution, are necessary. But how can we concede them after these attempts? Plehve had documents which seemed to prove conclusively that if we made the least concession we should all share the fate of Louis XVI. The Grand Duke is certain of it."

"I don't think you would."

'Nor I, but Plehve holds all the ropes, and my husband has complete confidence in him. He will be appointed, therefore, to crush the Liberal movement."

Serge was not satisfied in making himself the advocate of scandalous police intrigues. His lack of intelligence carried him a good deal further: in addition to the police, he sought salvation in superstition. The dominant note of his political life, his senseless affection for Pobiedonostseff, made him the accepted representative of Orthodoxy in Court, and every time that Nicholas in a spirit of dejection prayed for Divine guidance, it was Serge who assisted him at first by gentle methods, but if these proved insufficient, by threatening him with all the terrors of heaven and earth. The last and most terrible of these scenes between a mad fool and a melancholy one took place during the last visit of Serge to Tsarskoe-Selo on the 6th of January, 1905. On the advice of Pobiedonostseff, he ordered his nephew not to accord any reforms whatsoever to the excited populace. The Tsar was, however, not so certain that his divine duty was to do nothing. Serge then made a terrible scene, appealing to Vladimir, Alexis, and Alexander, and declared that "if it were impossible for him to follow the lines laid down by God, they knew what to do—they would replace a heretic Tsar by an orthodox one. History records as many revolutions in the palace in support of principle as revolutionary outbreaks in the street." It was after this threat of a palace plot that Nicholas appointed General Trepoff, Serge's Aide-de-Camp at Moscow, to the post of Governor-General of St. Petersburg. His part is played out.

VLADIMIR.

Vladimir Alexandrovitch, the elder brother of Serge, has exercised the dubious functions of chief of the Grand Ducal party to an even greater extent than did the latter. His advantage has lain in the fact that he is the hypothetical father of a series of Tsars succeeding to the virtually extinguished primogeniture of Alexander III. Having a better right than the rest to participitate in the guidance of the Sovereign's policy, he has assumed a more insolent tone and decisive line of conduct than Serge. A certain difference of character has also greatly contributed to this. Serge was merely a fanatic; one of those fools who believes, as a doctrine, in the symbolical value of destruction; a madman who would have become an anarchist had he not been born of an aristocrat stock, and developed into a Grand Duke steeped in vice. Gifted with the mind of an inquisitor, he owed much of his influence to the fear which he inspired. His twitching lips, his cruel and shifty eyes, gave the measure of his intellect. Vladimir, by comparison, is almost sympathetic; his *rôle* is less heavy tragedy, than comedy with a tragic plot. His moustache smiles at you, his lips curl with light humour, his eye is bright when not dimmed by alcohol; and it was with this smile and this vivacity that he organised the massacres of workmen in St. Petersburg in January, 1905. It is with the same joviality of a man of the world, or an old stager, that he spends millions, and dissipates colossal sums in gambling or on women. If his unlimited power was not subservient to his passions, Vladimir would have been merely an "old buck about town."

In addition to the intelligible ambition of seeing his family safely seated on the Throne, he is dominated by

a rather pitiful combination of cupidity and alcoholism, the results of which, it is true, are infinitely less amusing to Russia than to the psychologist who makes an abstract study of the intellect of degenerates. For beneath his polished exterior and his costly vices Vladimir conceals a defective mentality. His wife, Maria Pavlovna, a little German Princess, converted to the extreme of Muscovite reaction in the hopes of one day playing the part of Catherine II., easily leads him in politics, and his intellectual gifts are exclusively devoted to the science of peculation, where they are manifested in a remarkable degree.

The Autocracy, defended by Vladimir as strenuously as by Serge, even more strenuously than by Nicholas II., is less a question of principle than of money. That Tsardom still survives is largely due to its faithful minions of the mercenary bureaucracy, but still more to the desperate exertions of the Grand Dukes. The fall of the autocracy would be infinitely less serious for the former than for the latter, since the bureaucrats would still keep their appointments. At most they would have to resign themselves to be a little more honest. It is not so with the Grand Dukes; they would lose not only the opportunity of conducting the gigantic swindles which make up half their revenues, but would also be deprived of their authorised incomes. A brief analysis will show the extent of such a disaster. No Constitutional Government, for instance, would countenance the "appointments" of the Grand Duke Vladimir.

Out of the £2,000,000 odd allowed to the Grand Dukes from the Imperial Treasury (some thirty of them are direct recipients) Vladimir receives £250,000; his "personal" fortune, lands, forests, mines, &c., gifts from

his father, yield him about £150,000. The income from the first source is paid by the taxes on a starving people; from the second, by the farmers and workmen whom he exploits to such good purpose that they have nothing left to live on.

Then come the following revenues:—General (with various indemnities), £2,400; Commander of the Circumscription of St. Petersburg, £5,200; Member of the Council of the Empire, £4,400; President of the Academy of Fine Arts, £3,200; Member of the Committee of Ministers, £2,400. To these must be added the salaries which he derives as member of innumerable Commissions.

Hence, with scrupulous exclusion of peculations, an income is arrived at which equals that of several of the great Powers. But when we consider that his two sons, Cyril and Boris, in "fighting for their mother-country" have each incurred debts of more than £120,000 in Manchuria, whilst Vladimir himself, according to one of his bankers, has a deficit of £600,000, it is obvious that the discovery of new sources of revenue must be a chief preoccupation to him. With a nerve worthy of a Tsar *in partibus*, he has, once freed from Alexander III., who kept a close eye on him, profited by his "moral" influence over his nephew, Nicholas II., to launch out into bold enterprises. One stroke of good fortune alone brought him in nearly £2,000,000, sorely needed to pay his debts in France and Germany. He had, by right, the privilege of presiding at the Central Committee for the construction of the wonderful Cathedral erected in memory of Alexander II. on the spot where he was killed by the bomb. Subscriptions poured in, and the work was pushed on: but none of the architects, contractors, painters, and masons, ever

succeeded in getting paid. The publication of the fabulous number of roubles which the nation had subscribed set these people at their ease. However, after waiting twelve years, and incurring fresh expenses, they became uneasy, and complained. Judge of their horror when they found that of the £2,000,000 received there remained only a few notes of a thousand pounds! Inquiries elicited the fact that Vladimir had pocketed the rest! The Grand Dukes are legally "exempt from jurisdiction," whether criminal or civil. No power on earth could compel them to re-imburse what they had stolen. The Secretary and Treasurer of the Committee was made the scapegoat. This worthy man not unreasonably objected and threatened to disclose the whole matter. His lawyer, M. R——, was summoned to Vladimir's house—and everything was settled. A proper treaty was drawn up. The lawyer and the "criminal" undertook "not to mention the name of any member of the Imperial Family in the trial." Any breach of this observance would condemn the criminal to hard labour in perpetuity, while the lawyer would be debarred from exercising his profession. If, on the contrary, everything went well, the lawyer would receive an honorarium of 10,000 roubles; the criminal would be condemned to ten years' confinement in Siberia: this would be mitigated to enforced residence; he would, in fact, remain in Siberia for five years, and would receive 10,000 roubles a year; after that his escape would not be hindered, and he would be allowed to go to America, where he would receive a life income of 5,000 roubles. Everything happened as arranged, and one cannot but admire, if not the honesty of the tribunals, at least the resources of the Imperial Treasury, which to this very day continues its atonement for the shame of Vladimir.

Such financial success could only encourage Vladimir to profit in a similar manner by all the innumerable offices that he occupies, while he is incessantly soliciting new ones, always honorary, also always profitable. On this score he has had the misfortune to estrange the sympathies of certain circles of the Bureaucracy, whom he has fleeced of a portion of their illicit incomes for his own benefit. Many of these injured officials have spitefully insinuated that Vladimir has accumulated these "honorary presidencies" solely for this purpose. It is easy to understand their discomfiture, if one bears in mind that the very considerable bribes which were formerly given to the ordinary officials to obtain military commands now pass to Vladimir, and that the "advice" he was able to give as President of the Academy of Fine Arts to other bodies in the choice of architects and sculptors, or the purchase of works of art for the State, all helped to swell his pockets. His military position made him the virtual head of the Russian army in time of war (though this has not been apparent since 1904). It was his right, even his duty, to superintend the mobilisation and various accessory services. This he did to the best "of his interests." The acceptance of a "regal" present from a rich coal merchant, who since then has possessed a quasi-monopoly, has become common talk. But he took quite as much interest in cannon. The ingenuous Creusot has never been able to sell any guns on the Russian model to Russia. Inquiries (not made by the great French firm) elicited the statement from General L——, who was charged with the active administration, that "There is a house on the Neva where it is customary to preface consignments of iron by consignments of gold . . . ."

The same state of affairs applies to the boot department.

A foreign attaché—whose nationality cannot be divulged, the matter having given rise to unpleasant incidents—was questioning a Russian General in Manchuria in 1904 on the strange phenomenon of the troops marching barefoot, and received the following reply: "What! their boots? Where they are? Why, in the pocket of the Grand Duke Vladimir!"

If the interception of 50,000 pairs of boots can be explained by a keen humanitarian sentiment—Russian peasants generally go about barefoot in hot weather—it must have been a similar act of kindly consideration that saved the lives of innumerable Japanese. Vladimir had to send 300 large cases of ammunition to Manchuria in March, 1904; but, unfortunately, he had used the money which should have been devoted to the purchase of shells for other purposes. Nevertheless, heavy cases to be despatched from the Nicholas Station were transmitted through the streets of Petersburg. By some unaccountable mistake the nature of the consignment was examined on its way to Moscow. It contained only paving-stones! On the other hand, the affair of the pharmaceutical factory at St. Petersburg has involved loss of life for thousands of the wounded. The factory was a huge model establishment, constructed only a few years ago by order of Vladimir. Its business was to prepare all the necessary medical products in times of peace, which would keep in good condition in the event of war; and to hold itself in readiness to provide enormous quantities of the chemicals which could not be preserved till required. For three years

the factory was managed by a clever man who received a very good salary. At the outset of the campaign the Minister for War called to take stock of the supply of drugs, which had been manufactured at great expense, and discovered that nothing had been turned out, nay, there had never been any work done at the factory. The Minister summoned the manager, who arrived beaming.

"Come, now, at last we shall be able to do some work."

"What!" said Kuropatkin, astounded. "Nothing ready? It is scandalous! I will have you brought to justice. You will be responsible for thousands of deaths! Where is the stolen money?"

"The stolen money?" said the manager, also confounded. "Why, since my appointment I have never been able to obtain payment for the expenses incurred at my factory. I have asked for it a hundred times. Here is a complete copy of my claims on the Government; the outstanding amount is now more than two million roubles."

"The devil it is! Who is the administrator of the funds?" asked Kuropatkin.

"General L——, assistant to His Imperial Highness."

"Oh! yes, I see!—The money shall be paid you, and the work must proceed forthwith."

"It will take more than a month to set the work going."

"That will mean many deaths to us. Keep me posted."

This was one of Kuropatkin's last discoveries in his capacity as Minister for War. He was already appointed Commander-in-Chief to lead Russia to defeat

when, on arriving at Kharbin, his first surprise as Generalissimo was the discovery that a train which should have been filled with clothing, also despatched under Vladimir's orders, contained only fifteen wagons full of—straw! What a magnificent thing for Vladimir's pockets!

There are still many other things, among them a certain number of locomotives, which have been paid for, but never ordered; enormous "expenses" incurred in studying the merits of different systems of wireless telegraphy, one of which was to have been immediately adopted; 30,000 overcoats made of Perm sheepskins; and several thousand horses.

The results, alas! have proved inadequate, even from Vladimir's own standpoint, since his sons have unfortunately inherited a fatal tendency to extravagance far more highly developed than their father's, and even less judiciously manifested, if such a thing be possible. If the blessings of the War and the needs of the Red Cross, of which his wife is one of the most influential patronesses, have sufficed, for the time being, to raise the financial level of the family fortunes, this consummation is certainly no fault of theirs. On this score their father makes no complaint. What he does feel is the degeneracy of his offspring in another direction, the mournful fact that he, an "aristocrat of the aristocrats," should have sons of low tastes, men who, while spending yet more recklessly than their progenitor, have retained no traces of his gentlemanly attitude.

The extraordinary and disgraceful escapades in which one of these prospective Tsars (Boris) indulged during a journey he made to America supplied matter for scandalous comment all the world over.

The appeal of the American Press to President Roosevelt "not to receive at the White House a personage whose presence would stain the moral repute of his abode" stands as one of the most formidable accusations ever formulated against this dynasty of madmen and profligates. These same young bloods, who squander millions in jewelry, in gambling debts and orgies, have in the course of the present Russo-Japanese war behaved in such a fashion as to replace the hatred always felt towards them by the people by mere contempt. One, Boris, arrived in Manchuria with eight ladies recruited from different countries. He gambled, caroused, lost enormous sums of money, and refused consistently to go to the front and to carry out the orders of his superior officers. The scandal was having a demoralising effect on the troops. Kuropatkin sent for the Grand Duke and told him bluntly:

"You will send those women home before to-morrow; you will obey orders and lead your regiment to the outposts, *or* you will go back to Russia."

"Insolent hound! whom do you take me for?" was the answer of this scion of the Romanoffs.

"You are an Imperial Highness at home. Here you are merely a Sub-Lieutenant of Hussars. Now go."

At this Boris drew his sword and rushed at the Generalissimo, who managed to slip behind a table, and got off with a scratch.

The Grand Duke was put under arrest like a common soldier and clapped into a train starting for Kharbin. The same day (July, 1904) Kuropatkin telegraphed to the Tsar, demanding the instant recall of the last remaining representative of the dynasty at the seat of war.

The conduct of his brother Cyril cost sixty or more officers and men of the *Petropavlovsk* their lives. A

first-rate swimmer, and quite uninjured, he was making his way, after the blowing-up of the iron-clad, to the shore, which he could have reached in another five minutes. Round him were hundreds of injured sailors, drowning. The rescue boats dashed forward. He bellowed without intermission: "It is I, the Grand Duke! it is I, the Grand Duke!" Numbers of disabled men were clinging to the boats. "Knock them over the head," he ordered; "knock them over the head. I am the Grand Duke. Beat them off, I say." And this was done.

The first boat left all she encountered to perish, hauled the Hope of the Dynasty aboard, and . . . made for the shore, abandoning the others, who gave vent to their rage in howls and imprecations.

Cyril subsequently displayed a degree of acute nervous excitability which showed itself in fits of panic terror for a month after the disaster. He was haunted night and day by uncontrollable fear. They put his arm in a sling for him, for the benefit of an admiring Nation, and he was packed off to Nice to amuse himself.

Save for this tragic affair—for the St. Petersburg massacres count at most as a "regrettable incident"—Vladimir has known only two serious embarrassments in his life, the difficulty of balancing his ponderous person, too often debauched by over-feeding, and the problem of balancing his budget, too often exhausted in the gambling-hells and houses of ill-fame of Paris and the Riviera. So far, however, he has always managed to regain his equilibrium.

Once, after spending the night at a gaming club not far from the Madeleine, the Grand Duke in the morning found himself 50,000 francs to the bad, with no means of settling the deficit. His first impulse was to tele-

graph to St. Petersburg to ask for money to meet this pressing emergency. But the Petersburg authorities would have nothing to say to the matter.

Highly incensed, the Grand Duke next recalled an invitation he had received from a Parisian newspaper. The advertisement they expected to reap for themselves out of his august personality was surely worth some *quid pro quo;* so the Grand Duke opined, and very justly.

Accordingly, he despatched one of his henchmen to the Editor, with orders to explain in discreet terms the pecuniary straits in which His Highness found himself, and to suggest that the sum of 50,000 francs which he required should be put at his disposal for a day or two. The Editor accepted the proposal.

A few hours later His Highness might be seen alighting with his suite at the offices of the Journal in question. He inspected the premises from floor to attic, from Editor's sanctum to machine-room, while the photographer on the staff took him in a variety of poses to illustrate the next day's issue.

No man knows when, how, or in what shape the 50,000 francs were paid back—if they ever were.

In this case it was a mere matter of money; but whenever the Grand Duke's privileges or authority have come in question, the issue of his escapades has proved much more tragic.

In defence of the Imperial prerogative, he has not only organised massacres *en masse;* he has condescended personally to individual murder. In December, 1904, he set out in hot haste for Warsaw to inspect, nominally, the troops mobilised for the war, really the petticoats of certain accommodating ladies. A disaster befell the Empire. The Grand Duke's special train was hung up

in a siding for three hours, since the line was blocked by the mobilisation traffic. He would be too late for a most important engagement! Vladimir rushes at the station-master, who pleads the exigencies of the mobilisation service. A torrent of foul-mouthed invective is the only answer he gets. The unhappy man has the insolence to repeat his explanations. The *delirium tremens* of the Imperial lunatic culminates in a howl of rage. Vladimir lifts his hand; there is a flash of steel, and the station-master drops dead. The corpse is rapidly hustled away, and the police-report complacently returns the cause of death as a sudden and fatal stroke of apoplexy . . . due to chagrin at having inconvenienced the Tsar's uncle!

Futile to discuss the question of responsibility as affecting so high and mighty a personage. Other men, for any one of the innumerable acts—abnormal, shall we call them?—a few of the mildest of which are here cited, would find themselves at the hulks rather than in a madhouse. But the point does not touch Vladimir The Grand Dukes are by law above the Law. And so fully do they appreciate the fact that this is the corner-stone of their authority, influence and wealth, that they do not hesitate to claim the odious privilege in order to defend their position. The irony of fate has decreed that Vladimir—undoubtedly the ablest of them all—should succeed, by dint of this cynical appeal to prerogative, in wrecking the most important of the reforms which his nephew Nicholas, in his platonic love of justice, had dreamed of introducing. The scene will loom large in History, if only for its frank exposure of the deep-seated canker that is destroying the Russian body-politic, and the open and undisguised avowal that this disease is the very basis on which Tsardom rests.

The chief of the reforms promised by the Tsar and discussed by the Committee of Ministers was to consist in the guaranteeing of the "legality" of measures adopted by the different functionaries. This principle necessarily implies the right of the ordinary citizen to judicial protection against abuses of power on the part of his petty tyrants, and, as a corollary, the individual responsibility of each official for his acts. Now, this primary measure of reform was completely checkmated at the Committee of Ministers, thanks to the intervention of Vladimir, who with half a dozen of his relatives has a seat—it may well be asked why—at the Board. It was an act of self-defence which the august criminal accomplished for fear the new law should land him in the galleys.

Witte had opened the ball with a discussion of the conditions under which functionaries might be legally brought to book for abuse of authority and malversation of funds. Then the old Comte de Pahlen, ex-Minister of Justice and manufacturer of a renowned *kümmel* that has made his name for ever celebrated, a reactionary of course, but honest and well-meaning enough, because amply endowed with all the good things the world has to offer, took up his parable to make a startling observation. He said straight out:

"The plan is foredoomed to failure. It will be utterly impossible to carry through prosecutions of the kind indicated, unless at the same time a clause is inserted declaring that no prerogative of rank or birth shall be held to safeguard the guilty party against the consequences of his acts. Otherwise, without a stipulation of the sort, the accused will invariably find some exalted personage to cover him."

The effect was unexpected. Quivering with passion,

pale with anger, Vladimir sprang to his feet, and thumping the table furiously with his fists, shouted:

"I will never allow you to utter insinuations so insulting before members of the Imperial family, never, never!"—and with the words, the Grand Duke left the Council-chamber, banging the doors behind him.

The Committee made a note in the minutes of Pahlen's interpolation, and resolved that, such a proposal exceeding the powers of the Board, the entire question should be left in abeyance pending a supreme decision.

This incident affords a succinct explanation of the whole revolutionary agitation. On the one hand it exhibits the alliance of the Grand Ducal clique with the Bureaucracy, on the other the formidable solidarity that unites all those who are in office—a factor so inimical to the introduction in Russia of even a minimum of justice and fair-dealing to the advantage of the people. On this occasion Vladimir openly adopted the *rôle* that is proper to him, that of recognised head of the Secret Government, of the occult, irresponsible despotism which holds the reins of power above the Tsar's head—the *rôle* of chief of the Praetorians—and thereby constituted himself the target of the Revolution more even than the Emperor Nicholas himself. In fact, it is he, and the system he champions, the high bureaucracy, the association of anarchist malefactors acknowledging no law and still less the will of the Sovereign, whose overthrow is the main purpose of the Revolution. As compared with him, the other members of the clique are "small deer."

ALEXIS.

At most two other Grand Dukes, as well as the Empress-Dowager, are notable for the political activity they display.

Alexis Alexandrovitch, Vladimir's brother, is Grand Admiral of the Fleet. The professional sailor may well ask why; indeed, such is his incompetence in naval matters as to make him the laughing-stock even of men like Admirals Avellane or Alexeieff, whose compulsory retirement would do no harm to the Service. The man of business, however, knows the reason only too well. The Navy still more than the Army exists only in virtue of the most costly material appliances. Innumerable bargains have to be concluded, and the High Admiral is sovereign arbitrator of all orders to be placed and prices to be paid. The business relations of Alexis with a certain big coal contractor are matters of common knowledge. Astounding transactions for the supply of ships and guns complete the picture. Alexis has been foolish enough to pay far too dear for the anything but disinterested favours of sundry Parisian beauties, one of whom, Mme. B——, succeeded, in 1904, in practising a fine bit of blackmail on him by going to Vienna with some highly compromising documents relating to an important transaction. The fair lady handed these back in return for a sum of 100,000 roubles on the nail, and enjoyed the felicity of being received by the Grand Duke with an affection more touching than ever. For her benefit, and hers only, he laid felonious hands on the £120,000 collected by National subscription for the reconstruction of the damaged Fleet, and bought for his *inamorata* a cross in rubies worth £16,000. He was injudicious enough to parade the one, wearing the other,

in his box at the Michael Theatre (December, 1904). The audience sprang to their feet in fierce resentment, laughing derisively, and shouting: "The red cross! Down with the red cross! Give back the money provided for the Fleet,"—in a word, raised such a hue and cry that the Grand Duke prudently decamped with both his treasures. The non-existence of the Russian War Fleet is primarily his work, inasmuch as he "revised" every decision of the Admiralty, not with any reference to Naval resources and requirements, but to the resources and requirements of his own purse.

ALEXANDER MIKHAILOVITCH.

The husband of the Emperor's sister Xenia has known how to profit by the influence possessed by his wife over his brother-in-law. Long excluded on account of his defective intelligence from all posts of any importance, his ambitions, political as well as—financial, grew only the more exacting. "The man would stick at nothing," Plehve said of him, and Plehve knew what he was talking about. The enormous perquisites pocketed by his cousin Alexis haunted his dreams; he too must have a finger in the pie of "Naval Administration." So, the billet at the Admiralty being already occupied, he conceived the creation of a corresponding post for the Mercantile Marine—a business man's, a "financier's" post. To this end, he had first of all to disorganise the Finance Ministry directed by Witte, who had concentrated in his own Department the whole economic administration; in other words, he must precipitate the fall of this powerful individual—which meant into the bargain a political upheaval and upset of far-reaching import in favour of the reactionary *coterie*. It was a pretty hit—killing

two, nay three, birds with one stone. For the Grand Duke, as owner of vast forests in Siberia, effected yet another *coup* in the prosecution of his intrigues.

Foreseeing the War in Manchuria, he counted upon doubling the enormous profits accruing to him from the furnishing of wood required by the Trans-Siberian railway, both for repairs of the permanent way and as fuel for its locomotives. In July, 1903, he submitted to Witte a fresh contract for these supplies, in which all the prices were doubled; Witte refused point blank. A scene followed that baffles description. Alexander rushed to the Tsar, accused Witte of "disrespectful and revolutionary behaviour," called in his wife to the rescue, and made such a commotion that Witte was turned out three days later.

His successor signed the disputed contract. The Tsar had already embarked upon the Yongampho affair by the Grand Duke's advice, had nominated Bezobrazoff, a sharper of the first water, Minister of State without portfolio, and his friend Alexeieff Viceroy of the Far East; so he could hardly refuse him a personal favour. He created for him that department of shady transactions officially known as the Board of Mercantile Marine, whence the Grand-Duke exercised henceforth an extraordinary influence over different provinces of administration—a form of activity never contemplated as part of his duties, but extremely remunerative. An instance, approximating very nearly to treason, is offered by the purchase of Argentine vessels during the course of the War.

NICHOLAS NICHOLAIEVITCH.

As Alexis for the Navy, so his cousin Nicholas for military matters is looked upon by the family

as a genius, and wields some degree of influence in consequence. Unfortunately, fine horseman and finished dancer as he is, Nicholas has belied all the hopes entertained of his turning out a great man. The idea had been to set him at the head of the Armies of Manchuria. But, to say nothing of a well-founded dread of bringing the man's notorious inefficiency into prominence in a post where the exercises of the riding-school are not the principal duties, the probable financial consequences filled all concerned with consternation, and the project was abandoned. For, alas! Nicholas is the son of his father; he was indeed his aide-de-camp in the Turkish War, when his august parent was Commander-in-Chief, and in co-partnership with the Jews, Gregori, Cohn, and Company, contractors for the commissariat, signed hundreds of vouchers for supplies never delivered, took his share of the spoil, left his Army without clothes or food, and all but lost the campaign to benefit his own pocket, finally retiring into private life with a fortune of over £1,000,000. Nay, more, he—or if not he, his son—had the superb effrontery to recount his exploits in 1880 in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue*. This proceeding earned them a trial at law, police surveillance, a mere annual pittance, banishment to Nice, and most important of all—confiscation of the millions "illegally collected" for the benefit of —the Imperial Exchequer!

THE PILLARS OF TSARDOM.

The mosaic of facts like these, which might be multiplied a hundredfold, displays better than any formal analysis the character and extent of the Grand Ducal power. Why seek further afield to account for the universal odium incurred by these personages? Plun-

derers of the finances both of State and of individuals, everlastingly embarrassed, everlastingly petitioning the overpatient Tsar to pay their debts, fingering perquisites, whether directly or through the intermediary of mistresses and corrupt office-holders, they use their influence solely with a view to the satisfaction of their morbid instincts, and rouse the nation to an extremity of exasperation by the practice, open and insolent because immune from punishment, of all the abuses that flourish among bureaucrats—though these retain at any rate some vestiges of shame, and make some effort to cloak their misdeeds. The Grand Ducal clique is the true cancer of Russia, less by any overt acts than by the atmosphere of moral rottenness it disseminates through all official circles.

It is not, as in all other Monarchical countries, the Aristocracy (a class of men *beati possidentes* and therefore independent-minded, vowed to reaction by the very traditions of their rank) which supports and forms the bodyguard of this august brotherhood. The Aristocracy has no need to employ such methods, which would tend much more to its degradation than its aggrandisement. Self-seeking and unprincipled *parvenus* only are likely to profit by making themselves the lackeys of such a system. In Russia these are the Bureaucrats.

The Grand Ducal clique and the Bureaucratic caste are the pillars of that Tsardom the pathological horrors of which have here been indicated. The Bureaucracy, the advance of which goes *pari passu* with the decadence of the Aristocracy, has, on the contrary, found an implacable adversary in the latter. The Russian Aristocracy is the direct opponent of this *régime*.

Tsar and Court are nothing but the belly of the bureaucratic devil-fish.

CHAPTER II

ADVENT OF THE BUREAUCRACY

ONE of the most notable peculiarities of the anti-aristocratic movement in Russia is undoubtedly the fact that it is directed by the Nobility. It seems likely that this latter class is destined to play the same part in the Russian Revolution as the *tiers état* did in France. True we have been assured over and over again that Revolution is impossible in Russia, where no regularly constituted *bourgeoisie* exists. But what was the *rôle* of the French *bourgeoisie* in the Great Revolution? That of a class relatively wealthy and well educated, in opposition to a system of arbitrary government which debarred it from the free exercise of its economic and intellectual forces.

In Russia the corresponding *rôle* is filled by a section of the rich commercial class, and still more by the Nobility.

This state of things results from the formation of a bureaucratic caste, itself the consequence of the democratic reforms of Alexander II. Up to the middle of the last century the direction of political affairs was concentrated in the hands of the Nobility, under the close personal superintendence of the Tsar. It was the heyday of power of the aristocratic caste. Middle-class officials there were, but they were trusted with nothing better than mere routine work, and could never aspire to any high position. The appalling revelations of the

Crimean War, exposing the incapacity of this *régime*, forced Alexander II. to undertake "the great reforms of the sixties." The abolition of serfdom, simultaneously with the establishment of the *zemstvos*, and of reforms in connection with the administration of justice, the press, and public education, threw open official employment to crowds of young men of all classes on the sole condition of their showing capacity. Once the great official Colleges were made free to others besides the Nobles, aristocratic supremacy verged to its close, and the bureaucratic caste was virtually established. Capacity was now the one thing needful to pave a way from the lowliest to the most exalted office in the Empire. Within a few years the middle-class had appropriated all the official appointments. Then a psychological characteristic common to all *parvenus* came into play; their hatred of the Nobility, their masters of yesterday, remained unabated while the intoxication of power led them to subject the ordinary citizen, who was entrusted to their tender mercies as rulers, to intolerable oppressions. They proved traitors to all sections of the Nation; to the Government which had appointed them with a view to having loyal, scrupulous and capable officers; to the Nobility which hoped by this infusion of fresh blood to build up a new "nobility of merit"; to the middle-classes, which looked to be faithfully represented in the Administration by their fellow-citizens; and finally to the masses, which, crushed beneath the burden of serfdom, craved, if not an increase of well-being, at any rate some approach to common justice. A new caste came into being; scornful alike of Government and People, disposing of the enormous unchecked powers attaching to Administration in a country where thought is a crime and responsibility a personal appanage of the Sovereign, the

Bureaucracy was destined from the very first, by the laws of its natural development, to trample on its especial foe, the Nobility, and bound so to organise its methods as to hinder its victims from appealing directly to the Tsar, or even adopting measures of legitimate self-defence.

Decline of the Aristocracy.

These changes were the more easily effected inasmuch as the middle-class, larger numerically than the nobility, could push forward a greater proportionate number of individuals into high office. It is surely noteworthy that, for the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century, there have been out of a total of some dozens of Russian Ministers of State only seven Nobles. With the exception of Sviatopolk-Mirski, Tolstoï, Goremykin, Sipiaguine and Lobanoff-Rostovski, Lamsdorff and Buliguine, all the chiefs of Russian policy and administration have come from families of comparatively humble rank. Witte, an obscure railway *employé*, — his predecessor Vyschnegradski, son of a lowly village pope, — Bogoliepoff, Minister of Public Instruction, killed in 1900, son of a non-commissioned officer, — Zenguer, one of his successors, son of a minor official, — Plehve himself, and others, all are *parvenus;* and like *parvenus*, they have always taken a malicious pleasure in keeping out in the cold the man of high family and exalted rank. Personal aptitude, individual capacity, is all they look out for, and in this way they have recruited a powerful army of functionaries whose sole glory and sole moral principle is what may be termed "*arrivisme*",—an odious combination of selfishness, ambition, cynicism, greed and effrontery. What they want is money and arbitrary powers. At the

opening of their career they possess neither the one nor the other. Their only asset is their official position. This they exploit by every means in their power, honest or dishonest, so as to make money, and indemnify themselves for all they have endured in the past by bullying their inferiors and oppressing the mass of the people. Face to face with this formidable and ever encroaching power, the Nobility found themselves in a pitiable state of weakness. Not only had they lost the influence they once exercised upon public affairs, but they were actually reduced to precisely the same condition of subservience as other subjects of the Tsar. This hit them terribly hard, accustomed as they had always been to be treated by the Tsar's Government on an entirely different footing from the serfs and peasants. Of the old prerogatives of nobility nothing was left; once they had ruled autocratically over twenty millions of serfs, now they were themselves become the slaves of irresponsible bureaucrats. The sole trace of privilege remaining was the right to bear arms and to tack on their territorial title to their surname; in all other respects their status was identical with that of common workmen and peasants. The present-day situation of the Nobles in the Russian Empire corresponds exactly with that occupied by the *tiers état* at the dawn of the French Revolution, and their obvious *rôle* is to take the lead in the revolutionary movement. Their wealth is conspicuously diminished; two-fifths of their estates have been acquired by the *bourgeoisie*, in other words by traders and officials who have made their fortunes.

At the same time, in virtue of their personal relations with the Tsar and with foreign society, as well as of their relatively high standard of education, they have come to form the *élite*, as it were, of the victims of Bureaucracy.

Their influence over the peasants is still very great, and knowing full well as they do the impossibility of a return to the old aristocratic *régime*, they are bound, if they would shake off the yoke of the bureaucrats and regain their social importance, to use their influence and talent in favour of the general revolutionary movement, in alliance with and on the same lines as the intellectuals, the *bourgeois*, the artisans, and the peasants.

Bureaucratic Principles.

This rise of the Bureaucratic Caste and its direct consequence, the decline of the Aristocracy, are facts sufficient of themselves to account for the exasperation which the new *régime* was bound in course of time to stir up among the divers elements constituting what is known as the Russian Nation, that is to say, the congeries of peoples living together under the ineffectual sceptre of the Tsar. The governing principles of Russian Bureaucracy have never yet been clearly and definitely formulated; in fact, it was impossible they should be, seeing they are the logical result and not in any sense the programme of its political activity. They consist, as the painful experience of half a century proves, in the strictest possible application of M. Bieloff's aphorism: "Work is a forbidden luxury to all subjects of the Tsar."

The power of irresponsible functionaries is incompatible with all manifestation of energy springing from other initiative than that of the Bureaucracy itself. Energy, whether in its individual or collective aspect, may take the shape of national activity, championship of human dignity, economic effort and intellectual ambition. A Bureaucracy, therefore, in order to uphold its own omnipotence, is forced to take all measures it deems advisable in order to paralyse every manifestation of independent

action of this sort. It can but tend to resume in its own life the national life of the different races and peoples subject to the Tsar, and so invents a standard of Pan-Slavism, or rather of Pan-Russianism. It cannot understand or tolerate the resistance of isolated individuals from moral motives; so it leans on executive rather than justice. It aspires to control the industrial life, with a view to amassing wealth and checking the rise of any rival power; so, as a natural consequence, it cultivates pauperism. It dreads the intellectual elevation of the masses, because modern science *ipso facto* condemns it; so it organises ignorance. The four weapons of the Russian Bureaucracy, the four crimes whereby it has at last provoked a national reaction, and which at the present moment have dragged the country to the brink of an appalling cataclysm, are in reality nationalism, illegality, general impoverishment, and ignorance.

THE OLIGARCHY.

It is generally supposed in Europe that the Russian Bureaucratic Caste is incapable of following out any consistent plan of action systematically, whether in the interests of its own material advantage or for political ends. It is regarded as being split up into a large number of isolated individuals, mutually independent and antagonistic, each acting alone against all the rest. A Bureaucracy, it is argued, is the most perfect instance of absolute anarchy—a struggle of all against all. But if this were so, a bureaucratic *régime*, overriding the Tsar's authority, would be an impossibility, and the country would not have been driven into revolution by the well-organised tyranny that is crushing it.

Such a view would seem to be utterly erroneous. The bureaucratic despot who carried the *régime* to its

culminating point, Plehve himself, was no isolated individual. The two or three hundred leaders of the great army of functionaries are anything but a chaotic mass of rivals engaged in internecine strife. On the contrary, they are organised into regular bands of conspirators, or if not quite that, into compact groups of *arrivistes*, actuated by identical interests. They form an Oligarchy, in fact; and it is a factor of no small significance for the future that the Imperial policy for more than a score of years up to Plehve's death has been the work of an Oligarchy deliberately planning and consciously carrying out a preconceived purpose. It is imperative to analyse its component parts, if only to make manifest in what manner, by what means, and as against what opponents the educated classes can succeed, as things are now, in bringing about fundamental reforms likely to result in a complete transformation of the Empire.

The Moscow Group.

The Oligarchy in question is made up of three groups—police functionaries, officers in high military and naval command, the more ambitious among the Grand Dukes. The second of these groups was the earliest organised, the one to take the initiative in the vast enterprise of laying violent hands on the Russian Empire. Its beginnings are remote, but as clear as daylight. It originated at the "Second Military Cadet School" at Moscow.

At this noble and distinguished Institution there existed in the years from 1862 to 1868 a little band of "inseparables," an association of class-mates forming an exclusive *coterie*, the members of which were already actuated by the most far-reaching ambitions. The mere

enumeration of their names will give those familiar with the Bureaucracy of to-day some imperfect idea of the vast purview of their enterprise. The group included —without counting the black sheep who went wrong, the great humanitarian anarchist, Cherkessoff—the following friends and comrades: Bezobrazoff, Vanlialarski, Basil and Valerian Sakharoff, Volkoff, Petrovski, and Pusanoff. These young officers, if we may trust the reports of their instructors and superiors, were none of them specially remarkable, whether for natural talent, success in their studies, or ability as officers in the field. But being possessed of some influence, together with an aptitude for intrigue, they mutually pushed each other's fortunes. Here are the positions they have severally attained, after uniting the two other groups (Police and Court) in their common activity: Bezobrazoff, Minister without portfolio, Director of the affairs of the Far East before the War; Vanlialarski, General of Division; Basil Sakharoff, Minister of War; Valerian Sakharoff, Chief of Staff of the Armies in Manchuria; Volkoff, General in Command at Kharbin; Petrovski, ex-editor of the *Moskovskiya Vidomosti*, the principal organ of the reaction; Pusanoff, General of Gendarmerie in command of the Police.

Sundry other illustrious members of the Oligarchy, men of a different origin and environment, are wanting in this list—in particular Plehve; Muravieff, ex-Minister of Justice; Alexeieff, ex-Vice-Regent of the Far East; Kleigels and Wahl, former Prefects of St. Petersburg; as well as certain Grand Dukes, notably Vladimir, Serge, Alexis, and Alexander, the Empress-Mother, and Pobiedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod. Their inter-relations, however, become plain if we follow up their activity in detail.

THE MASTERS OF ALEXANDER III.

The period at which this activity began definitely to manifest itself curiously coincides with the accession of Alexander III., or, which comes to the same thing, with the sinister reaction inaugurated by that monarch against the last express wish of his father—victim to the bomb of the Yekaterininski Kanal. At that epoch certain high personages in the counsels of the Tsar, men of maturer years than the members of the "Moscow group," had been constrained by the course of events to act in concert, in order to secure the success of a plan, bearing a strong family likeness to a plot, so as not to lose the advantages attaching to their position. It was a purely heterogeneous agglomeration, in which unity had never reigned, but which, on the contrary, was perpetually being torn to pieces by trivial rivalries. Its most prominent constituents, till then isolated from one another, were: Pobiedonostseff, Plehve, Muravieff, the Grand Dukes Vladimir and Serge, and the new Empress. The mysterious and suspicious circumstances attending the assassination of Alexander II. had brought them more or less together, even before the Moscow group provided them with a regular secret organisation. A dead man was its pivot; the murdered Alexander II., assassinated by the group to escape Constitutional reform.

The Tsar had signed the Constitution drawn up by the Dictator Loris Melikoff. It could not be promulgated the same day, as this was a Sunday. Its formal publication was fixed for the morrow. The bomb was thrown at the supreme moment. The Tsar had received the most peremptory warnings. Plehve, head of the political police, was cognisant of the entire plot, one of

the conspirators having turned traitor. The ringleader, Cheliaboff, was already arrested. Save for the exact day and hour, the whole thing was known beforehand with the utmost precision. Sophie Perovskaïa replaced Cheliaboff. This Plehve had not discovered, but he was aware of the means they proposed to employ. On the fatal Sunday two alternative routes were open to the Tsar; the conspirators were ready for both. One of the streets was mined; along the other waited, at well chosen intervals, thirty bomb-throwers. In one or the other, the Tsar was foredoomed to meet his death. In the one and the other, Plehve had failed to discover anything suspicious. He gave a holiday to his wonderful secret police under pretext that Cheliaboff was arrested; knowing better than anyone that the disappearance of a particular ringleader is of no importance among the Nihilists, he had been at no pains to take further measures of precaution. The inevitable catastrophe ensued.

The passive guilt of Plehve and his partisans assumed an active complexion from the moment they coerced Alexander III. into committing what really amounted to a State crime by preventing him, as above, from promulgating the Constitution which was already legally in force. The direct instigators of this crime were Pobiedonostseff and Plehve, the two ulterior chiefs of the bureaucratic oligarchy. Their act is an indication of their character.

POBIEDONOSTSEFF.

Constantine Petrovitch Pobiedonostseff, now an old man of seventy-eight, but still a fighter, is gifted with a singular power of dialectic. His early works on the Russian

Civil Code had attracted the attention of Alexander II. A slave to the letter of the law, he laboriously built up on the old texts of the History of Tsardom the monstrous edifice of a Theory of State, the pillars whereof were Orthodoxy, Absolutism and Nationalism. Was it not enough to dazzle a Tsar who had not an idea of his own as to what theory he should embrace? In the hope of sparing his sons the like crises of conscience, he gave Pobiedonostseff the direction of their education: and this hide-bound, mediæval, savagely uncompromising pedant, the systematic apologist of oppression, armed with the irresistible dialectic of Hegel, and all the weapons of modern Science turned against herself, became the guiding spirit of a quarter of a century of Tsarism.

Professor to begin with, then Senator, eventually Procurator of the Holy Synod, he had attained to spiritual omnipotence at the very time when the brains he had modelled, fettered, compressed in the mould of his own ideas, were to be called upon to think for the Empire. Never before, at any epoch of History, had so overwhelming a degree of mental supremacy been attained by a simple functionary. Sundry prerogatives, formidable in theory, which attached to the Procurator of the Synod, but which it had never been practicable to exercise under Tsars who knew their own powers, now became an appalling reality. The *veto* he exercised theoretically in the Tsar's name against any decision of the Convocation of Priests which governs Orthodox opinion, became in his hands an engine of absolute domination. He, and he alone, personally and individually, remained the connecting link between the political and religious powers of the Tsar, in a land where autocracy is a dogma of the Faith, and

where the people, under the empire of odious world-old superstitions, are held in obedience only by the authority of the Church.

Subjugating on the one hand the countless masses of the Orthodox by his Synodal power, on the other dominating his bewildered pupils, Tsars and Grand Dukes, by the ascendancy of an undoubtedly superior intelligence, the empire of which, originally imposed upon timid adolescents, preponderated over their minds as adults, this Grand Inquisitor, this Occult Pontiff, has wielded an irresistible influence over the destiny of Russia, even in periods when his personal prestige seemed to be temporarily eclipsed. His pupils followed unsuspectingly where he led; and the iron claws of the Church, instruments of his fashioning, automatically retained their grip on the moral and intellectual life of the Nation, after the master, the Grand Lama of Russia, the idol of the Tsars and their heedless Court, had withdrawn into the ivory tower of philosophical speculation. Alexander, Serge, Vladimir, Nicholas II. and the Empress Marie were or are his slaves. Through them Pobiedonostseff reigned —through them the one thing really important in the man, his ideal of the State, became a political reality.

PLEHVE.

What this modern Torquemada—the name given him by his own rebellious priests—has been by his intellectual weight, Plehve has been by dint of direct activity, a factor infinitely more influential than theory in the life of States. He is the pure political incarnation of Pobiedonostseff's fallacious Theocracy. His life as nearly as possible covers the most unhappy period of

Russian history, and if the apogee of his *régime* could only be attained by means of the mysterious community of aims that bound him to the Moscow group, his sanguinary star was already shining with a malign brilliancy during the years that intervened between the assassination of Alexander II. and the accession to power of this oligarchical coalition.

Born in 1846, in Lithuania, of parents of German origin, he was adopted as an orphan by a well-to-do kinsman, who treated him in every way as a son. The tiger's claws were already peeping out. In Lithuania he lived in the house of his uncle, a Polish Catholic, while he himself was a Protestant, like all the Germans of the Baltic provinces. He changed his faith without the smallest hesitation. The same thing happens with perfectly conscientious persons, whose minds by degrees become more and more emancipated, till they reach free-thought. In his case, the evolution of his religious avatars was in the contrary direction, but always parallel with his chances of material advancement.

He became a convert to Catholicism at sixteen, since this was the condition on which his uncle made him his sole heir. Impatient to come into possession of his fortune, he did a grand stroke of business by taking advantage of the ferocity of the infamous Muravieff the Hangman, who at that time was stifling the Polish insurrection—under a pile of corpses. Plehve denounced his uncle as being in affiliation with the insurgents, and Muravieff had him hanged as a Revolutionary. Plehve inherited his property, received a bursary for the Faculty of Law at Moscow in recognition of his parricide, passed his examinations brilliantly—the more so since Muravieff continued to keep an eye on him—and at twenty-two was placed in the Ministry of Finance. Plehve,

fortune-hunter and informer, traitor and parricide, became a champion of Justice!

In another two years he was Public Prosecutor at Moscow, assisted by a young nephew of Muravieff. His earliest triumph was the sentencing of the young Prince Cherkessoff, the black sheep of the Moscow group, to deportation for publishing official statistics proving the awful state of destitution into which the peasants had fallen, thanks to the unjust execution of the ukase ordering the abolition of serfdom. First striking proof of talent in the reactionary cause, and first association with the Moscow group and Muravieff! His police adroitness earned him the administratorship of the St. Petersburg Criminal Courts just when Nihilism was making determined attacks on the Tsar, who had repented of his projected reforms. His reputation grew and increased, and he was appointed Head of the Political Police. The astuteness with which, under circumstances already detailed, he managed to induce Alexander III. to take back the Constitution signed by his father won him, despite the general contempt, the absolute confidence of the men he had saved—Pobiedonostseff, Serge, Vladimir. He was now and henceforward the indispensable head of the party of reaction.

MURAVIEFF.

At the same date he enlisted in his service the younger Muravieff and his brother, a diplomat and lobbyist of talent. Indeed, the two Muravieffs both stood well at Court; their uncle the Hangman had given the best proofs of his attachment to Tsarism. Plehve looked upon them as invaluable auxiliaries, and pushed their fortunes all he could. At his recommendation Muravieff was

sent to Paris to treat for the extradition of the Nihilist Hartmann. He subsequently appointed him Special Prosecutor for political suits, since no one else appeared so eloquent nor so blindly imbued with the principles of repression by brute force. He was to see that the Nihilists were condemned to death. Muravieff carried out his orders to the letter, and a brilliant career opened before him under Plehve's auspices. For thirty years these two, as we shall see, have constituted a pair of Siamese twins, who by their combined efforts have destroyed the edifice of Russian justice from top to bottom.

PLEHVE'S PRIVY PAPERS.

In those gloomy years when Alexander III. was whittling sticks, the while his irresponsible masters terrorised him with exaggerated accounts of the dangers he ran, the Head of the Secret Police was omnipotent, a god dispensing life and death. All men were subject to his surveillance,—Tsar, Grand Dukes, Ministers, Generals, just as much as the tramps on the high roads. He utilised this power to fill his pigeon-holes with "confidential papers." A knowledge of all the scandals and misdemeanors attaching to his colleagues, past, present, and to come, was at a later period *par excellence* his armour of defence and weapon of offence against Liberal tendencies in general, and his personal enemies in particular. The Empire became a den of thieves. His first victim was the author of the cancelled Constitution of Loris Melikoff. His case offers a fair instance of Plehve's methods.

Loris Melikoff, nominated Dictator, ruled with sovereign power at the time of the tragic death of Alexander II. In hunting down the "Nihilists," and on the

pretext that he suspected them of being partly recruited from the higher ranks of the Bureaucracy, Plehve displayed a marvellous talent in the organisation of his *cabinet noir* (secret service). As may be supposed, he employed this instrument of investigation, like all the rest, exclusively in favour of his machinations against those Ministers whom he wanted primarily to be rid of. About the "security of the State" he troubled himself not a whit; its insecurity was the guarantee of his personal power. Loris Melikoff himself was conscious of the closest surveillance on the part of his subordinate, and complained of it bitterly.

This is proved by an extract from a letter addressed by the Dictator to one of his friends, a General Officer:

". . . It is really too much. Both my colleagues and myself, everyone of us, are at the mercy of this individual. All our letters are opened, and presumably copied. He has the run of all, even the private and confidential, documents that reach us; and I have no doubt whatever that, on occasions, he makes use of any that serve his purpose. Yet I can do nothing because, under this new *régime*, he is indispensable as Head of the Police. I advise you, therefore, never to send me letters by the post nor telegraphic messages. Make arrangements for their reaching me by the hands of acquaintances calling here, or by special messenger. . . "

What could be more suggestive than such a complaint? and what more curious than this impotence of powerful Ministers, unable to rid themselves of the malefactor and his nefarious doings? But Plehve was indispensable to the Grand Dukes and to Pobiedonostseff. The precautions Melikoff suggested came too late. Plehve had already possessed himself of certain of his letters containing scathing denunciations of the clandestine

suppression of the Constitution. The Dictator was a Revolutionist! Vladimir submitted the papers to the Hermit of Gatshina. After a bitter scene of explanation between Tsar and Dictator, the latter resigned office.

Instead of Plehve, however, too young and—too dangerous, Makoff, a notorious peculator, was called to the Ministry of the Interior.

He remained only two months in office. His right arm, of course, was Plehve, who, since he controlled the Secret Service, was in a position to keep his superior posted in all the private affairs of other politicians. A regular system of police blackmail could thus be instituted. Mysterious disappearances of public funds never of course, for good reasons, cleared up by Plehve rounded off this *régime*. The scandal was so great that in July, 1883, Makoff committed suicide, whereupon Plehve lost no time in showing up his indiscretions . . . which had been much to his own advantage. In this way Plehve succeeded in demonstrating his personal probity, since it was he who had collected the documents that ruined the immoral and nefarious Minister.

The Creation of Anti-Semitism.

To show his gratitude to Pobiedonostseff and his pupils, as well as to prove his orthodoxy (double-dyed renegade as he was) of the purest water, Plehve at once proceeded to elaborate his laws of exception against the Jews, whom he charged, contrary to his real convictions, with all the crimes of the Revolutionists. Meantime, the hoped-for promotion hanging fire, he had recourse to a device of truly diabolic ingenuity to draw attention to the pressing importance of this reform. After Loris

Melikoff's fall, he saw the seat of power occupied by Ignatieff, a mere lay-figure, equally weak and pretentious. From him Plehve at once obtained a free hand to create the diversion against the Jews which was to serve as safety valve for the popular exasperation. Not the System of Government, but the Jew, was to be held responsible for all the calamities of the country. In lieu of Tsarian Autocracy and himself, he threw to the lions . . . the Jews.

The grand simplicity of Plehve's policy calls for admiration. Any anti-semitic propaganda he deemed superfluous. Logically he was convinced that, once a few hundred Jews were massacred, Anti-Semitism would spring up spontaneously; in fact, from the people's point of view, the mere fact that somewhere or other massacres had been invoked to put the Jews to rights would be proof positive that the Jews are all scoundrels, fit only to be cut to pieces. Accordingly the first thing to be done was to organise some massacres. But what would civilised Europe say? Witte once declared "there is only one thing the Russian Government is afraid of, the indignation of Europe." Here then was the *crux*. Let us prostrate ourselves before Plehve's genius in solving it!

Anti-Semitism must first be created in foreign countries; then later on it can be asserted for Russia that it was merely an importation from a corrupted Europe! And the scheme succeeded. Russia was ringed round with a circle of anti-semitic countries. Of these the most important, for its bearing on Russian eventualities, was Rumania.

From St. Petersburg and Moscow more than five thousand police agents were despatched over the frontier, some as *iconâres*, hawkers that is of *icons* or

sacred pictures, others as *conovales* or travelling horse-doctors. These redoubtable emissaries simultaneously created the violent Anti-Semitism that still dominates the country, and the Pan-Russian movement. The task was the easier from the fact that in a large portion of Russian Bessarabia the Rumanian element preponderates. In this way the anti-semitic agitation in Rumania spread spontaneously to the south-western regions of Russia.

It was at the same date that Anti-Semitism began to appear in Austria and Germany. And if, as regards Austria, precise information is lacking at present, it is, on the other hand, practically certain that the anti-semitic campaign in Germany has been fostered almost exclusively by funds supplied from the Russian Ministry of the Interior, and distributed by the hands of several families of the Lithuanian and East Elbe aristocracy, who acted as intermediaries.

Thus Anti-Semitism in Russia was merely an effect of the "odious foreign influence," and Plehve could wash his hands of the matter. Educated people did as they did in Germany, while the peasants copied the Rumanians.

Plehve imported sixteen hundred Rumanian fanatics to Odessa, where, shepherded by the agents of the Chief of Police, they executed the first great massacre. . . .

The result quite answered expectation. The whole south-west of Russia rose against the countless hordes of Jews who eke out a miserable existence in those provinces. *They* caused the poverty and corruption, and everything else. The Press itself, censored as it is by the police, joined in this cannibal concert. No one gave another thought to the Nihilists, and Plehve under cover of Anti-Semitism enjoyed the felicity of annihilating the

group of the *Narodnaïa Volia* (Will of the People), nucleus of the Revolutionary agitation.

Yet again Plehve was admired as heartily as he was despised. Ignatieff fell. Plehve's great hour, however, was not yet come. On the contrary, he had next to do with a Chief of another, and much superior, calibre, with the result that he enriched the pages of Russian history with an episode that reads like a chapter from the *feuilleton* of a daily paper.

PLEHVE THE CONSPIRATOR.

Dmitri Andreevitch Tolstoï, an ultra-reactionary, was Minister of the Interior. Despotic to a degree, he made no ado about interfering occasionally in the department of the omnipotent Plehve, Chief of Police. The latter was deeply offended. Moreover, he aspired to the preponderating place at the Ministry of the Interior, but as he was still too young to be appointed Minister, he wished to instal in this important office a man of utter insignificance, on whom he could rely, and whose assessor he would be.

Two things were needful. First, to create a vacancy, in other words to get Tolstoï killed by the Nihilists; then to find the man for the vacancy: and this, given the circumstances, could only be the individual who should have covered himself with glory by laying hands on the ringleaders of the revolutionary movement.

The man plainly indicated was Sudeikin, Plehve's ordinary factotum, his Colonel of Gendarmerie, an unscrupulous martinet who carried into execution what Plehve planned—dull-witted, and ambitious into the

bargain. By Plehve's orders he opened negotiations with the most ambitious of the Nihilists, Degaïeff, of whose equivocal attitude he was aware, from confidential reports. It was at Degaïeff's house that the Nihilists met regularly in secret conclave. Sudeikin, proposing at Plehve's suggestion the assassination of the Minister Tolstoï, won, if not the confidence, at any rate the attention of Degaïeff. The latter, confident of his ability to have him "put out of the way," if he should prove a traitor, admitted him along with the other Nihilists, thus affording the spectacle of police and revolutionists plotting together.

It was a dangerous game for all concerned. However, directly Sudeikin saw or thought he saw that Degaïeff's ambitions were stronger than his convictions, he confided Plehve's plan to him. And this was his simple project. Degaïeff was to organise the assassination of Tolstoï. Plehve would be kept informed, and would have certain Nihilists (but not the real offenders) arrested by Sudeikin; later on these would be allowed to escape. Sudeikin could easily make out that he held the whole governing body of the Revolutionary party in the hollow of his hand. Then, Plehve aiding and abetting, Sudeikin would be made Minister of the Interior with Plehve as Vice-Minister. On the other side, Degaïeff himself would be appointed Head of the Police. Degaïeff, as he confessed later, jumped at the offer, telling himself that in such a post he could be guided by circumstances, and act either against the Government or against his own party. Both ways he stood to win. Some even of his fellow conspirators, believing him to be honest, foresaw a prodigious triumph for the party in his eventual appointment. Meantime, Plehve demanded pledges of Degaïeff's good faith from

a police point of view. The latter did not hesitate, but betrayed to Plehve the two most notorious of the female Revolutionists, whose capture was eagerly desired, and would mean a big success for the two confederates. Vera Figner and Mme. Volkenstein were thus arrested. The one languished for twenty years in the casemates of Schlüsselburg, whence she was released in 1904, and deported for the rest of her days to Archangel in the extreme North of Russia; the other was liberated some few years ago.

Degaïeff's treachery was soon discovered by the other Revolutionists, and from that moment the success of the plot was compromised, because in these conditions no member of the Association would agree to "suppress" Tolstoï. Plehve was immediately informed of the facts; and as Degaïeff's treachery had already procured a triumph for his Department, he abandoned the project and left Sudeikin and Degaïeff in the lurch. Plehve was sure of the discretion of the former, since he could denounce him as a friend of the Nihilists. The second would, he was convinced, suffer the vengeance of his comrades. Nay, he actually reported the details of the conspiracy against Tolstoï to the Tsar without naming Sudeikin, and was warmly congratulated on having discovered the plot he had hatched himself! He had his reward, and obtained the post he coveted.

Degaïeff was cited to appear before the Revolutionary Committee. He cut a somewhat sorry figure, but avowed his double dealing with a frankness that went a long way towards redeeming its heinousness in the eyes of his associates. He produced documentary evidence of everything he alleged. It was resolved that Sudeikin was a more abominable traitor than Degaïeff, and the

latter was ordered to "suppress" Sudeikin, and this done, to vanish into foreign parts.

Degaïeff organised the affair. On December 28, 1883, he and his companions forced their way into the betrayed traitor's apartments. They chased the unhappy wretch from room to room, and after a terrible struggle, managed to hustle him into the closets, where they battered in his skull with the housebreaker's tools they brought with them. An hour later, Degaïeff, forsaking hearth and home, took train for the frontier, and sailed for America, where he still lives.

Constitution of the Oligarchical Group.

Plehve heaved a sigh of relief. The sole vestiges of the conspiracy were the two unhappy women in the State prisons, and the largely increased importance of His Excellency von Plehve, now Vice-Minister.

At this time, therefore (1884), close ties of common interest already united the Grand Dukes, the Empress, Pobiedonostseff, Plehve and Muravieff. No systematic course of action was as yet possible. Indeed, it is open to doubt, in a cursory view, whether the constitution of the coming Oligarchy and the details of its accession to absolute power, really deserve, in the history of the pre-revolutionary period, so prominent a place as is here assigned to them. But the very point which differentiates this period from analogous epochs in other countries is precisely this preponderance of individual influence over the collective opinion. The gradual transformation of popular notions shows itself not as a spontaneous evolution of the mental attitude of the

masses, nor even as a democratic reaction in the abstract against a system, but rather as a protest against the individual acts of particular persons whose arbitrary executive is elevated into a principle of government. It has been the curse of Russia to be ruled not by a detestable system, but by detestable individuals. The secret springs of the Revolution are found not in its opposition to a *régime*, *i.e.*, an abstraction of the collective activity of a ruling caste, but in its hatred for the individuals administering the *régime*, who have turned it to their personal advantage. For this reason the Oligarchy, of which Plehvé was the chief instrument, has probably exercised a more important influence on the fate of Russia than even the awakening of the popular conscience.

Plehve, Assistant-Minister of the Interior, yet at the same time a police agent, and scorned as such, soon realised the necessity of an organised Oligarchy. But he saw only too clearly that he could never master the elements then predominant. Pobiedonostseff, a high philosopher, looked down upon him as a mere cook concocting the political broth of the day. Katkoff, even, who was in some sort the mouthpiece of the "public opinion" of the reaction, and who interpreted in leading articles the theories of the civil Pontiff, could not well respect him. It was a question of temperament. Katkoff worked in open daylight, in all the glare of journalistic publicity; Plehve's activity was confined to the darkling regions of the secret police. Then began the amalgamation of these diverse elements by the Moscow group, whose *arrivisme*, lacking alike in principle and temperament, was to woo and win the support of all the reactionary leaders without exception or distinction.

Of this group the two quickest to get into their stride, as the jockeys say, were Petrovski and Vanlialarski. The first was connected through his family with the famous, or rather infamous, Katkoff, who was at that period rather by way of being the Gambetta of the Reaction. Petrovski was his private secretary, and at the same time Assistant Editor of the *Moskovskiya Viedomosti*. His interest in reactionary circles grew *pari passu* with that of his notorious chief. Under the administration of Dmitri Tolstoï again, he came into contact, through Katkoff, with the world of Government officials, in which his chief was the leading spirit. Even in these early days he knew Plehve, head of the political police, and backed up his brutal methods with all the weight of his journal. Using Katkoff's influence, and anxious to attach the group of his old comrades to Plehve's fortunes, Petrovski got his friend Pusanoff appointed Colonel of Gendarmerie at St. Petersburg, and Orderly Officer to Dmitri Tolstoï. Thus Pusanoff became Plehve's right-hand man, and one of the few initiated into the secrets of the reactionary Government. (On the death of Katkoff, Petrovski took his place on the *Moskovskiya Viedomosti*, as also in the reactionary faction at Court, and even in the counsels of the Empress and her chief adviser, Pobiedonostseff.) Their journal, the daily commentator and consistent apologist of the *régime* which kept Alexander III. whittling sticks, was universally regarded as the accredited organ of Tsarism; and Petrovski, in concert with the rest of his allies of the Moscow group, found it possible in some degree to unify Pobiedonostseff's theory, Plehve's practice, and the aspirations of the reactionary Grand Dukes. In a country where, so to speak, the

Press does not exist, a newspaper was the true originator of the most powerful political group. By publicly expounding the details of a common course of action, as yet non-existent, it actually brought this community of action into being. The *Moskovskiya Viedomosti* created a Governmental group consisting of Katkoff, Petrovski, Pusanoff, Plehve, Pobiedonostseff, the Grand Dukes, and the Empress.

Muravieff, now as always backed by Plehve, soon held an influential position in it. His star rose about 1887, when Manassein was Minister of Justice. He first came to the front in connection with a typical stroke of business. Alexander III., under the sinister influence of Pobiedonostseff and Plehve, resented his father's action in granting the people some semblance of justice, viz., the Courts of Assize and Justices of the Peace. These institutions were highly popular with the masses; and, therefore, clergy, police, and Emperor resolved to abolish them. To effect this, however, required, according to the Imperial statute, the co-operation of the Minister of Justice, the Council of the Empire and the Senate. Everybody refused, and a man of straw devoid of principles or scruples became necessary to save the situation. Manassein resigned, and Muravieff undertook to carry the thing through. On this condition he was appointed Minister. The Tsar exhibited an absurd prejudice against breaking the dynastic Constitution. It was necessary to win over the Senate and the Council of the Empire; but despite the united threats of Plehve and Muravieff this was found impossible. Only the Courts of Justice were abolished. Still Muravieff was in office, and his collaboration with Plehve could henceforth be counted upon to produce the expected results in the way of reducing the country

to proper subjection under the high officials of the Bureaucracy, and modifying the laws to suit the arbitrary executive of the officials.

COURT, ARMY, AND POLICE.

Nevertheless, no real confidence or co-operation as yet existed between the different professional groups of which Katkoff's journal was the common mouthpiece. It became a question how to remove the natural distrust which the Court entertained towards the journalists, police officials, lawyers, and functionaries generally, all belonging to a class but recently emerged from the bosom of the despised masses. One element only could give the necessary point of union, viz., the military. Pusanoff, Petrovski, and Plehve planned to utilise the remaining members of the Moscow group of comrades to this end, although an event of considerable import had already consecrated their power. Katkoff had announced in his journal, in so many words, that the Chancellor Giers was a negligible quantity in Russia, and this at the very time when the diplomatist in question was experiencing the greatest difficulty in staving off a war with Germany (1887); he had expressed the view that a Franco-German war was Russia's best hope, because in that case Tsarism could simultaneously force its friendship (and get good value for it) on France, and its wishes on Germany, weakened by the struggle. War was imminent, but Giers disavowed Katkoff and succeeded in avoiding it. Katkoff, for his part, disavowed Giers, and openly defied him to carry out his policy against the wishes of his paper. He was summoned to an interview with the Tsar, to whom Giers proposed two alternatives—to accept his resignation, or

to reduce Katkoff to silence. Alexander III. did neither, and from that time forth the group of the *Viedomosti* was recognised as the supreme power of the country. A reconciliation between the *personnel* of the Court and this occult association became only the more urgent.

Such influence as Petrovski and the Muravieffs possessed at Court would hardly secure the advancement of the Moscow group of officers. But fortunately the god of love came to the rescue. Vanlialarski, a handsome, muscular fellow, a prime favourite with the noble ladies of the Court, to which his family connexions had gained him admission, was fortunate enough to win the affections of one of the most powerful, and most dissolute, of the Grand Duchesses, whose name it would be indiscreet to mention, as she is still living. The great lady could refuse her adorer nothing, neither place nor favour; and the gallant soldier's good fortune extended to his friends, taking the form of numberless promotions. The gifts and graces of this group of comrades, till then buried in obscurity, burst upon an admiring court, and Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses vied with each other in seeking their society. The civil section embracing Petrovski, Plehve, Muravieff, Pusanoff and their congeners, which already turned to advantage in its vast financial operations the special and exceptional talent of one of its members, Bezobrazoff, now found itself happily completed by a military section, filled with the same aspirations, and favoured by those very members of the Imperial family who would have looked askance at the other *côterie* as smacking overmuch of police associations.

Henceforth the group could make itself felt as a factor in imperial politics. Controlling the police, the

administration of justice, the reactionary Press and a proportion of military officers in high command, it entered upon the path of reaction, of reforms reversed (as will be seen later), intended to free it from the obligation of invoking the supreme authority to sanction each several act, while it simultaneously cultivated the field of business politics, so as to confirm and strengthen its pecuniary resources. At this rate the Grand Ducal clique was likely to become more or less futile; its only chance, therefore, of maintaining itself in power lay in participating boldly in the enterprises of the conspirators, so as to preserve at least the moral control of their activity. The result was the consolidation of the group on a definitive and indissoluble basis. Sundry tools of the Grand Dukes joined the higher ranks of the Bureaucracy, from which kinsmen of the Tsar are excluded. Vladimir supplied the military element to recruit the band of the Sakharoffs and Vanlialarskis—men like Wahl, Kleigels, Sukhomlinoff, Chertkoff,—worthy representatives of their patron. Serge, still under the ferule of Pobiedonostseff, and mainly concerned with religious interests, pushed forward his particular *protégés* Sipiaguine, Bogoliepoff, Zviereff, Buliguine, Trepoff, along the same path. Holding for the present posts of more or less insignificance, these men were equally dependent on the Moscow group, now at the head of affairs, and on the Grand Dukes. To some degree they formed the connecting link binding the two together.

The dominating idea of this enlarged and extended Oligarchy was to enslave the heir-apparent, the Grand Duke Nicholas, before his accession to power, and to impose upon him beforehand a type of policy in accordance with its own interests. What was this policy to be?

To leave Russia in the hands of the Oligarchy, and pursue distant projects of aggrandisement profitable to the exchequer and redounding to the glory of the conspirators. A grand opportunity presented itself for removing the future Tsar from the sphere of his primary duties.

At this date the Grand Duke and heir-apparent Nicholas had fallen victim to some extravagant passion or other, and was to be banished for a while from the scene of his exploits. A voyage round the world was decided on, and naval officers at Court began one and all intriguing for the supreme favour of commanding the ship destined to bear the fortunes of Russia's future monarch. The business man of the Oligarchy, Bezobrazoff, who had thoroughly studied the subject of English colonisation, dangled the dazzling financial splendours of a policy of expansion before his comrades' eyes. Military expeditions would bring fame and fortune to the Generals and Admirals; enterprises in distant parts would bring grist to everybody's mill; the diplomatic world, still as always ruled by the nobility, and, therefore, the implacable enemy of the group, would find its energies employed elsewhere; the Tsar's attention would be diverted from internal affairs. All these results might be gained by the clever organisation of the tour; and Bezobrazoff set to work to pull the secret wires. Obviously the general arrangements could only be entrusted to the one man who knew Asia best, a personal friend of the Grand Duke, Prince Oukhtomski, whose enthusiasm for the East would work unwittingly in favour of what all desired. As captain of the ship Bezobrazoff had his eye on an officer, a *persona grata* at Court, albeit utterly unscrupulous, an Armenian as wily as his fellow-countrymen always are, mixed up in

financial affairs and devoted to the general policy of the group. His name was Alexeieff. He had a formidable rival in Avellane, also a very useful ally, but unfortunately so heavy-witted and maladroit there was no blunder he might not commit. Intricate negotiations followed. Vanlialarski invoked his amorous exploits of an earlier day. But while Vladimir, at his wife's instance, thenceforth supported Alexeieff, the Grand Admiral Alexis backed up Avellane. Eventually the latter retired from the contest under promise of receiving the command of Kronstadt and a brilliant foreign mission. Thus Alexeieff made his entry into history by the backstairs of a Grand Ducal bedchamber.

Everthing turned out as provided for. Bezobrazoff *happened* to be at Vladivostok when the Prince arrived there. Nicholas could make no head against such a consensus of opinion—Oukhtomski, preaching the amalgamation of the Slavonic and Turanian races; Alexeieff, descanting on the glory of ruling the Pacific and the facility of political expansion; last, but not least, Bezobrazoff, fondly invoking the seductions of India, and prophesying the fabulous enrichment of Russia by the development of commerce with the Far East. His feeble brain took the desired impress; and as the same influences continued to be exerted without intermission for a whole year to the exclusion of all others, it remained ineffaceable, and set a definite and distinctive stamp on the mental attitude of the future Tsar. By the time Nicholas came back, he regarded Russian expansion from end to end of Asia as the all-important aim, the most sublime glory, of his reign, which began soon afterwards. . . .

When Nicholas mounted the throne, the Oligarchy, therefore, had not only transformed his Empire into a

scheme for the benefit of a bureaucratic clique, and confined his duties as a Sovereign to the registration of the decrees formulated by a secret government, but it had likewise paved the way for that policy of expansion in Asia which was one day to serve as a safety-valve against popular protests, and at the same time form a superlative source of wealth and glory.

But at the very moment when omnipotence seemed well within the grasp of this occult combination, when the bureaucratic chiefs were exulting over those orgies of illegality and spoliation which are to be described later on, the peace of the conspirators was rudely broken by the sudden appearance of a formidable "outsider," an unsuspected "dark horse," whose rough, uncompromising energy upset their plans for ten long years, and turned their golden age into a time of dark and desperate struggle, even more disastrous to the country at large than their unchecked depredations would have been. For this struggle brought with it profound changes in the constitution of an enslaved society, an aggravation of oppression, but an aggravation likewise of the general wretchedness which prepared the way for the National Awakening and the Revolution.

This skeleton at the feast was Serguei Yulievitch Witte

CHAPTER III

WITTE'S *RÉGIME*

IT was with more of amazement than of apprehension that the reactionary Oligarchy saw the attainment of power by a "man of no account" at a time when it already seemed to control all the military and administrative forces of Tsardom. A bureaucrat, like everybody else, the little *parvenu* must obviously seek the support of the great and powerful, and could only do so by making himself useful to them. The profound ignorance of all the principles of political economy on the part of Grand Dukes, Generals, Admirals, Police Officials and Legists alike, nay, even their business advisers themselves (who were not so much financiers as sharpers), led them to look upon the administration of the finances of the Empire as a mere organisation of tax-collectors, whose business was to extort a maximum of money from the population—money subsequently employed in improving the material condition and moral prestige of the Court and higher Bureaucracy. Any notion as to the economic well-being of the country was utterly foreign to their minds. They had heard of such a thing, but they confounded it with the theory of individual liberty, and even with

revolutionary ideas. In fact, up to the end of the reign of Alexander III., the Ministry of Finance had remained quite a secondary wheel of the machine of State in Russia. The interests of the ruling Oligarchy centred in popular oppression in every form and shape. Their conception of government was the Asiatic idea of a mass of people exploited for the advantage of their rulers by military and police coercion. The great lessons of modern European history had passed them by. To regard the State, as England, America, France and Germany had come to do, as an entity pre-eminently and essentially economic, required a mental effort of which they were entirely incapable. Finance was a thing apart, an auxiliary means of oppression, a "professional" matter that should not, so they thought, exercise the least appreciable influence on politics.

They made no resistance to Witte's advancement, although the latter was already credited with ultra-modern tendencies. But they would have certainly put in force against him all the sinister resources of their intrigues if they had had the smallest inkling of the preponderant *rôle* which the economic question was destined to assume under the auspices of this remarkable man. No doubt all through Nicholas' reign the reactionary Oligarchy has governed Russia, administered, oppressed, exploited her, and finally brought her to that condition of wretchedness and consequent desperation of which we shall meet with characteristic proofs further on. But during the same space of time, with an independency of action more or less pronounced, Witte has overturned from top to bottom the whole economic structure of the Empire, interfering in the little transactions of the other bureaucrats with brutal roughness, encroaching occasionally on their

prerogatives to the profit of his personal plans, eclipsing them every one to pose in the eyes of the outside world as the representative figure of a Russia modernised little by little every day, overtopping the Tsar himself by his disquieting prestige, due to the dazzling parade of economic power with which he cleverly invested a decaying *régime* and a nation expiring beneath the weight of its woes. Witte's activity is the life of Russia from the accession of Nicholas to the eve of the Russo-Japanese War. If all his work has remained factitious, this is the fault of the reactionary Oligarchy, which, after realising the irresistible forces that were awakening in Russia outside its own narrow circle, only redoubled in zeal in its malign course of action, under pretence of combating a "revolution" that was nothing really but an aggregate of reforms, dangerous only by reason of their possible counter-effects.

Witte's governmental activity constitutes, as much from the standpoint of Tsarian as from that of popular interests, the most important element in the course of events preliminary to the Revolution. His leading idea, that of making Russia into a modern State, the living forces of which reside in its industrial and commercial capitalism, the essential tendencies of which are those of augmentation of the popular well-being by means of the development of natural resources, is as a conception by its very nature incompatible with that of Tsardom or of a bureaucratic Oligarchy. For its instrument, if not its object, can only be the creation of two social classes, hitherto non-existent in Russia, and with which Tsardom and Bureaucracy alike inevitably find themselves engaged in a ruthless struggle—the capitalist *bourgeoisie* and the industrial proletariat. These are the very two classes, which in intellectual grasp and spirit of enter-

prise far surpass all the rest, the classes whose rise could not fail to be signalised by an opposition, ever more and more violent, to a system of government based exclusively upon the subservience of crowds of uneducated peasants, bound to the soil, and upon an official caste existing on the crumbs that fell from the table of debauched Princes. Whether Witte meant thus to lay the axe to the root of the old pseudo-patriarchal Tsardom is more than doubtful; but this much is certain, that he foresaw grave economic crises. Ten years ago he spoke out in these characteristic words: "If, under my system, crises arise, if there are failures and losses, and temporary impoverishment with all its inevitable serious consequences, we must not be over anxious. They are the complaints of childhood, incidental to all nations entering upon the modern epoch."

This transformation of these inevitable economic crises into a purely political crisis, as much by an inherent and natural development as by the constant rebound of the oligarchical *régime* upon Witte's activity, is precisely the factor that has dominated the last decade of Tsardom even more than the weight of reactionary oppression. Tsardom realised too late that the economic condition of the people is what really determines the political situation.

Still quite young, this man, whether "malign" or "great," undoubtedly marked out both by intellect and character for an extraordinary career, had arrived by sheer dint of ability and hard work at a position of some importance. Uniting by a happy crossing of races the patience, plodding industry, analytical temper, and a gift of marshalling facts and figures effectively, in a word "the scientific mind" of the German, with the

astuteness, keenness, gift of rapid assimilation, versatility—consisting in alternative phases of truckling prudence and brutal frankness—of the Armenian, he had early found means of proving his singular capabilities as a financial administrator by the skilful balance-sheets he drew up in his modest post of Actuary to the Railways of the South West. His promotion was rapid. At a time when the newly built railways of the country were going through a period of painful depression, he was practically the only man who could "organise combinations" which saved them from yet worse disasters. Vychnegradski, Minister of Finance, invited him to take the direction of the Railway Department. And when, before the growing exigencies of the reactionary Oligarchy, by which Alexander III. was launched upon distant and costly enterprises in order to get a free hand in Russia, this Minister assured the Tsar it was impossible to make any further increase in the burdens that weighed upon the population, Witte alone was found ready, with obsequious courage, to submit to the Sovereign a series of projects that belied this view. He pledged himself to develop the State revenues to a large extent, in spite of the grave condition of affairs; and the Tsar, who did not understand one word of the whole scheme, but who welcomed the promise that the trans-Siberian Railroad should be built, entrusted the *parvenu* with the duty of purging the financial constitution of Tsarism—on the very morrow of the terrible famines of 1891. Did Witte mistake his orders? He set to work at the same time to reorganise the economic condition of the people, a thing he had never been asked to do, and which ten years later was to culminate in a catastrophe.

The Economic Upheaval.

Dominated by a perfect mania for capitalisation—of which he repented later, when it was too late—Witte's one panacea was the accumulation of enormous reserves. At the same time his ambition led him from the very first to foresee the possibility of becoming the sole master of Russia—at least in all that concerned its economic and external policy—by means of these accumulated sums, which he had been instructed to provide in a general way. His whole financial system, then, is summed up in one single operation repeated over and over again—the extortion of important amounts from one source or another, the employment of these amounts to increase the credit of the country, and his own personal prestige; then the utilising of this increase to procure still more important amounts. The operation is of the simplest, and his methods of carrying it out were simpler still. But the political effects have proved extremely complex, inasmuch as, of the four or five means which civilised States employ to raise money, Russia, when Witte first came to the front, was really familiar with only one—a more and more onerous taxation, without any compensating benefits to the public weal. The prodigious revolution Witte invited in the social life of the Empire is merely the direct consequence of the necessity he found himself under of appealing to new sources of fiscal revenue, preferably those acting automatically, which he had to create almost entirely before he could turn them to advantage. So, while assuring the equilibrium, to all appearance more and more stable, of budgets which swelled with dizzy rapidity, he was bound, to satisfy this first essential

duty, to have recourse to certain fresh factors in the problem. These factors, secondary in the eyes of Tsar and Oligarchy, but which soon became the all-important one in the life of the State, are nothing more nor less than the national credit and the industrial energy of the people, together with their necessary pre-conditions, economic prestige in other countries, monetary stability, support of industry by protection and bounties, improved means of communication, and, lastly, commercial and colonial expansion. All this was secured by Witte's *régime.* Nevertheless, it has all remained purely factitious, because the impulse given had nothing corresponding to it in the way of natural economic effect, only a series of governmental measures—contrived with wonderful astuteness to obtain by side-issues the enormous sums of money the Tsar and his *entourage* required.

Witte, a bureaucrat by force of circumstances, an autocrat by predilection, could do nothing less than set budgetary considerations above all others. His capitalist instinct and his remarkable talents for industrial organisation have led him, it is true, to create, simultaneously with manufactures previously non-existent and railways hitherto of secondary importance, the social development destined to assimilate the middle classes and the Russian proletariat to the corresponding classes in civilised countries. But this was done with no wish to modify the social structure of the Nation. The real object was always the same, to create an economic impetus by means of this modification that should render the people capable of bearing heavier fiscal burdens. Hence the artificial character of all that the Witte *régime* has done to develop the wealth—or, rather, the taxation—of Russia. Hence, again, the influence, as malign in its effects for Tsardom as the

administrative oppression of the bureaucratic Oligarchy itself, which the pretentious policy followed by Witte has exercised on the progress of revolutionary ideas. It is indispensable, in the first place, to analyse this influence from the standpoint of governmental action. Later on we shall see the consequences of its rebound as affecting the mental attitude of the masses.

THE SCREW—ALWAYS THE SCREW.

Budget considerations now dominated the situation. What was the state of things before Witte? By what direct means did he modify the same up to the date of his retirement in July, 1903?

Under the financial administration of Bunge the annual deficits had become very alarming after the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War. The annual increase of receipts, on the contrary, was only twenty-five million roubles. Under his successor, Vychnegradski (1887–1892), this increase reached thirty-five millions; under Witte, ninety-five millions! But the corresponding rise of expenditure at once reveals the essential secret of the "wealth" of the Russian Government. Under Bunge the increase was seventeen millions a year; under Vychnegradski only four, and under Witte twenty-five. That is to say, under the first-named, there was an "economy" of eight millions, an augmentation of reserves to that amount, under the second of thirty-one, under Witte of seventy! Vychnegradski, instead of employing his surpluses to better the conditions of the people, began by writing off the deficits, in which he acted rightly; but, at the same time, he amassed large reserves of gold, in view of the monetary reform necessary for the consolidation of the prestige of Tsardom after the lamentable

depreciation of the rouble that had occurred since the Turkish War. Thus the interests of the country were sacrificed in favour of the prestige of the Tsarian Government, the productive budgets (education, communication, agriculture) being reduced to a minimum. Meantime, the marvellous surpluses of Government receipts were flaunted before the eyes of international capitalism. Under Witte things remained the same; and if the increase of expenditure also is very much more considerable, this is because a proportion of the strikingly augmented receipts had to be used, if we may say so, in feeding the goose with the golden eggs; that is, the hothouse industry he set going, and the French investors who kindly filled up the inconvenient holes of the "extraordinary budgets," subserving the special interests of the Oligarchy, whether military, police, or merely peculative. (At the same time, this return of a portion of the sums wrung out of the people's pockets to productive channels, is the one and only ray of light in the gloomy picture to be unfolded).

How have these receipts, more surprising and more gratifying every year, been secured? In a civilised country, administered by financiers and not by autocrats or by bureaucrats, the first task would have been to stimulate the intensity of the economic life and above all to augment the power of buying possessed by the great bulk of the population, in order subsequently to levy a reasonable percentage on the increased turnover. Perhaps Witte originally proposed to act thus. But he found it an impossibility, seeing that the great bulk of the population (ninety per cent.) is agricultural, and illiterate into the bargain. To augment its powers of absorption, it would have been needful first of all to better its economic situation—a thing only possible by

dint of reforms (education, freedom to move from place to place, reasonable conditions of employment), not only costly, but "political" to such a degree that they must have prejudicially affected the Tsarian autocracy. Witte was, therefore, forced to begin at the wrong end.

Instead of successively accomplishing the three great stages of progress, the completion of which meant to his prophetic vision a Russia grown rich and prosperous, *viz.*, agrarian reform, development of industry and commerce (to satisfy the new wants created by the first among the people), participation of the State in the profits of an increased turnover in the form of taxes—instead of this, he had to follow the reverse course: first, increase of revenue receipts by direct methods; second, evolution of an economic organism of modern type capable of securing the supply of the new wants as yet non-existent; third and last, on the Greek Kalends, the creation of a population fitted to absorb the products of its own industry! Under these conditions of reversal, Witte has done all that it was humanly possible for him to do; but he has succeeded merely by cheating the whole world as to the internal mechanism of this fantastic project.

The simple statement of what this mechanism is suffices to expose the fallacy of the "development of Russian wealth," on which the economic prestige of the Tsar is based. It may be that the pitiful ignorance prevailing in the Western world, and notably in France, of the Russian language and national life, has really led the public to put faith in this prestige. But it is at least equally likely that the best informed among the French people have shut their eyes to the fraud from political motives. It is, in fact, very remarkable how the Vychnegradski era (first budget surpluses, gold

reserves) coincides with curious exactness with the preliminary stage of the Franco-Russian Alliance. The truth is that this alliance has drawn closer and closer in direct ratio as the economic prestige of Tsardom called with greater urgency for external support. Moreover the express declarations of Vychnegradski and Witte to intimates, leave no doubt about the very clear consciousness possessed by the Russian Government that this international connection was largely a matter of bargaining and mutual convenience. "We sell our military prestige for the economic prestige we lack," said Vychnegradski, but he forgot to add that this military prestige could only be maintained by means of the economic prestige so much desired. The one-sided bargain once struck—and ten times over renewed—Witte had the effrontery not even to employ the ten milliards he had tapped out of French savings in securing a genuine development of Russian wealth instead of the fictitious one originally assumed. The fact is, as we shall find, that he was henceforth compelled, in order to preserve his own personal authority, to sacrifice almost all the profits of his international marauding to the hungry maw of the Oligarchy. The pretence held good, and holds good still.. It consisted in building up a brilliant and imposing *façade* of financial prosperity to catch the eye. This is effected by continually repeated applications of the screw—always the screw of taxation; and has successively brought in its train not the development but the arrest of economic life, impoverishment in lieu of enrichment, wretchedness instead of well-being, as also—through the corresponding reduction of productive expenditure (notably on education and hygiene)—the most appalling physiological and psychical decrepitude

amongst the people. This is a succinct analysis of the decadence concealed behind the imposing screen of the Witte *régime*. The general movement of the financial situation under Vychnegradski's and Witte's administrations—the second being in principle (check of expenditure, forced increase of receipts) merely an amplification of the first—may be shown in a shape as startling as it is simple.

Three imposts have been abolished during this period: the peasant's poll-tax (54 million roubles)—the rouble is about 2*s*.—on the eve of Vychnegradski's taking office; a portion of the annual instalments for the redemption of lands paid by the peasants to the Government since the abolition of serfdom (12 millions); the tax on passports (4 millions) in 1898. Result, a loss of 70 millions. This has been made good by fresh imposts, as follows: Transformation of the poll-tax into annual payments in redemption (20 millions); tax on the interest payable on transferable securities, in 1885; tax on rents, 1894; patents, 1898. The aggregate receipts from these sources amount to only 90 millions. The other direct taxes have only yielded, as a result of the economic development of the people, the pitiful increase of 10 millions. All this proves that the direct imposts (total increase of 30 millions, after deducting the 70 millions of taxes given up) have done absolutely nothing to give the extraordinary impetus to the State revenues foreshadowed in the fantastic dreams of finance reformers.

The results seem less unsatisfactory as regards the profits of State enterprises. In Russia the Government is not only industrial and commercial, as in civilised countries; it is above all agricultural. Accordingly, revenues from farming out the Crown lands and profits

from the forests have always been considerable. The increase under these heads (same years, 1887 to 1902) amounted to 75 millions. At first sight this appears to be a highly satisfactory development, due to increase of population and material advance of the peasantry. But, in plain words, the major part of this "progress" only implies the imposition of fresh taxes. The truth is, the Government has constantly raised the charges for taking up land, and arbitrarily exacted higher and higher prices for wood from the forests sold to the peasants—a remarkably simple way of increasing revenue, if we bear in mind the fact that the renting of these lands and the purchase of this wood are an absolute necessity for the peasantry, where no possible competition exists of which they can avail themselves. It is a virtual monopoly of land and wood which the State exercises. It is undoubtedly a direct tax, thinly disguised. Of the 75 millions increase of receipts, nearly a half accrues from this source alone!

It is the same with the State industries, the real monopolies. These have yielded an increase of receipts of 60 millions—half from posts and telegraphs, half from brandy. Now it is true with regard to the first of these that it has been found practically impossible to turn the screw tighter, but the fact remains that postal charges in Russia have come to be so exorbitant that, in view of the entire lack of ready money among the mass of the population, they are quite prohibitive for the poor, and constitute a heavy tax upon everybody else. The unreasonably high profits from posts and telegraphs, so far as these items can be got at separately in a budget of infinite complexity, come to nearly 30 millions out of a gross receipt of 45 millions, that is, to two-thirds of the total—showing plainly that this

service, pre-eminently a civilising agency in modern communities, is in Russia merely an engine for extracting from the public a maximum of money—a tax on the interchange of ideas. As to the monopoly of spirituous liquors, which has become a fiscal instrument of a revoltingly immoral nature, its "brilliant" results are not due to any development of purchasing power, but on the one hand to the largely enhanced prices of strong drink, associated on the other with a positive pressure exercised by Government agency on the masses to make them indulge in alcoholic excess. The peasant, as will be shown further on, spends on an average at least 7 per cent. of his gross income on this poison, while of this 7 per cent. $6\frac{1}{3}$ is the share of the State, the actual value of the commodity representing only $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. Here, no less than in the post-office monopoly, is surely a terrible, an immoral impost!

Coming to the railways, a third source of revenue, the case is somewhat different; though here again the boasted "progress" consists partly in a disguised impost in the shape of interest on the enormous loans contracted for the purchase of certain systems from the companies originally owning them, and for the construction of others. The railway budget has been lightened to the amount of 50 millions by the nationalisation of the lines, doing away as it did with disbursements by way of guarantees; but a much heavier sum has been added to the burden of external indebtedness. A truly magnificent piece of progress! Meantime the increase of receipts rises to 170 millions, which undoubtedly signifies an important development of traffic. Unfortunately this fine prospect has all been changed since 1900. Receipts are falling steadily—so much so that bonuses have altered into deficits of a more

and more alarming character, reaching for 1903—the war year 1904 must be taken as exceptional—the stupendous figure of 240 millions, *i.e.*, about £24,000,000. This is the result, by official admission, of the construction of new and utterly unproductive lines, called for by no real requirements of the population, but undertaken for mistaken political or fiscal considerations. Be this as it may (and we shall presently see all the importance of the phenomenon), it is obviously and beyond question the proof of stagnation, if not of retrogression, in the economic life of the nation. The State artificially nurses the vast railway industry rendered useless by the general impoverishment—a symptom all the more serious because it had been largely extended on purpose to . . . enrich the productive classes. As a matter of plain fact, then, the increase of receipts from the railways is a figment, and their management actually amounts to a fresh tax.

What more than anything else has given the Vychnegradski-Witte epoch its enormous receipts is indirect taxes and customs. The latter have brought in an increase of receipts of 100 millions, the former as much as 200; thus we have, at the end of the financial era in question, £30,000,000 annually extorted from the wretchedness of a famine-stricken people. How, in brief, has this vaunted "financial progress" been accomplished? The *same receipts* which, under Vychnegradski, showed an annual increase of 19 millions, have attained a further augmentation of 32 millions annually under Witte! Under the first-named, direct taxes remained stationary, while indirect increased 12, and customs 8 millions yearly; under Witte, direct taxes have increased 5 millions a year, indirect 14, customs 13! Moreover, to this must be added the new taxes levied of every sort and kind. The final result stands thus:

between the rise and fall of Witte, the total increment of receipts amounts to more than 450 millions (over £45,000,000), or an average of exactly 45 millions per annum. Of this total, an average of 10 millions was furnished by the agricultural operations of the State, of which 5 millions at least must be counted equivalent to an impost. All the rest, *viz.*, 40 millions annually, represents increase of taxation. Such is the final analysis of the results of the administrative genius of that great economist, Witte.

Taxes and Misery.

This "brilliant" development of the wealth—not of Russia, but of Tsardom—is the more wonderful, inasmuch as at the moment when Witte took up the reins his predecessor had just resigned office, in consequence of his temerity in sending in a report, in which he warned the Tsar "that it would be dangerous to make any further increase in the burdens of the population." He had, in fact, realised that the result of his efforts had been . . . . the complete arrest of advance in the consumption of articles subject to indirect taxation. The new duties on tobacco, spirits, petroleum, matches, stamps, manufactures, had led to a sudden increase of receipts to the amount of 110 million roubles. But the tobacco industry (57,000 kilos. in 1886) was steadily declining (40,000 in 1892). So too the sale of alcohol (5½ million hectolitres in 1886, 2½ millions in 1892); while later again, under the system of monopoly of spirits, the consumption has still further diminished, till it is now only 2 litres per head per annum. The imports of coffee for the same seven years have declined from 8 million kilos. to 6. As for tea, the Russians' favourite

beverage, still, however, regarded as a luxury, though the positive total imported was greater, the consumption per head was less, the population having increased 10 per cent., the importation of tea only 3 per cent. On the top of it all came the great famine of 1892 . . .

But Witte ruthlessly ignored his predecessor's pessimism. He began by still further augmenting the existing duties. The result was disappointing, it is true. But then the Minister set about feeding the goose of the golden eggs, the tax-payer, to wit, with a sumptuous diet of "intensification of the industrial and commercial life." The first lacked means of production; the second, means of communication; and Russia was incapable of creating either. Then the French Alliance was called in to the rescue. The State borrowed little by little some ten milliards, private enterprise three or four more. The employment of these immense sums, which cost the Russian tax-payers—who have, as we shall see presently, to meet even the interest on the industrial capital—more than £20,000,000 yearly, was, according to Witte, exclusively "productive." Indeed it proved so, as a matter of fact: for some five years numberless factories were built, and railways constructed of an enormous aggregate mileage. Millions of workmen realised considerable advantages so long as this feverish activity lasted. Then to crown all, thanks to a happy chance —which, alas! was not repeated subsequently—the harvests were good.

Under these circumstances, the purchasing power of the masses developed, and the yield of the indirect taxes increased. The Customs receipts simultaneously showed a remarkable accretion, increasing by over £4,400,000 per annum. Yet at the very same time the Russian people began to scale the Calvary of general impoverishment.

The well-being of the masses had been augmented, not by the more energetic exploitation of the wealth of the country, but by the influx of capital sums expended on the first installation of the apparatus needed for such exploiting. The people was, so to speak, eating up this capital instead of the interest it was intended to yield. Accordingly, so soon as the "primary installation" of this modern apparatus was complete, the smiling picture assumed more and more sombre colours. It now became a question not merely of creating, but above all of consuming, absorbing the new articles produced by the new plant; in a word, outlets had to be found, to feed the "means of production and of communication" wherewith Witte had succeeded in endowing the country by means of the French gold. As these outlets, in view of the vast industrial developments of Western Europe, were obviously non-existent abroad, they must be provided within the confines of Russia. Exorbitant customs duties were introduced in order to exclude foreign products from the home market. But nothing could arrest the impending disaster. Not even when thus protected could the new, artificially-fostered industry survive. Internal market there was none after the fat years of the "primary installation"; the purchasing power of the masses had fallen back again to a pitiful minimum.

Except the State—which pays twice over with the tax-payers' money—there was nobody to absorb, for instance, the products of the metal industries; the instant Government orders fell off, these industries were on the road to ruin. The State which had brought them into existence, which had needed them especially to carry out its enterprises in railway construction and to provide the army with modern weapons, found itself

compelled still further to swell its budgets, to spend still more of the tax-payers' money on useless objects—absolutely unremunerative lines of railway, unnecessary plant of all kinds, solely in the hope of retarding a terrible economic catastrophe. It was again the peasant, the chief tax-payer, from whom money was wrung, the money the metal industries were supposed to "make"!

Nor is this capital instance in any way exceptional. In all other industries the course of events has been practically the same,—only more rapid, and more disastrous, in those which the State cannot prop up by means of direct commissions.

What are the reasons of this economic crisis, which has contributed more than anything else to precipitate Revolution? They are extremely complex.

Decay of Industry.

To begin with, it must be stated that the extremely low level of demand for commodities on the part of the Russian population, which leaves industry to work, so to speak, in a vacuum, is connected with the wretched conditions under which the mass of the people, the agriculturists, live. Before trying to account for this excessive poverty, let us accept it as a fact, so as fully to realise the catastrophe involved in the system of "intensification of the industrial and commercial life" pursued by Witte. It is in reality—irony of fate which the great economist had not foreseen—the manufacturing industries themselves which have yet further diminished the purchasing power of the people, and closed up its sole inlet by excessive protection, under the shadow of which it has been fostered. A protective system carried to the extremest limits was to enable

Russian industry to keep up the prices of its products at a level sufficiently high to cover the enormous sums payable as interest on the capital expended in installation and cost of production. This has resulted in a very substantial rise in prices of all manufactured articles. It is impossible to compare these increased prices with those that obtain in France, where they are still higher. But in France the average gross income per head is 750 francs, and in Russia . . . 50! Compared, however, with prices in Germany, where the income per head is at least five times greater than in Russia, the prices of manufactured articles under the Witte *régime* have increased on the most extraordinary scale, *e.g.*, for petroleum 150 p.c., steel 300 p.c., agricultural implements 160 p.c., cotton goods 357 p.c., cloth 225 p.c., coal 200 p.c., tea 304 p.c., tobacco 687 p.c., paper 630 p.c., handicapping the Russian consumer in a ratio varying between two to one and seven to one!

And it is amazing to see that this appreciation of prices has benefited Russian industry to a far less degree than it has the Imperial Exchequer. Imports from abroad, in fact, and consequently Customs receipts, have steadily augmented, while native Russian production, on the contrary, has diminished. Thus import dues really constitute a special duty intended to cover the eventual losses of manufactures, but resulting as a matter of fact in a levying of money by the State direct from the public, without this money passing through the manufacturers' hands at all. To give a typical instance from the textile industry. The import duties on manufactured cotton (muslins) are at the rate of 60 roubles (£6) per 100 kilos. Now 100 kilos. of cotton cost in Russia, on the average, 210 roubles; the same quantity is worth in England something less than 150 roubles;

cost of carriage included, this is the rate at which the goods would sell in Russia but for the protectionist tariff.

The Russian buyer therefore pays 60 roubles per 100 kilos. excess. The Russian consumption exceeding 200,000 tons, the buyers' loss comes to 125 million roubles (£12,500,000) per annum, at the lowest estimate. It forms, in fact, a real tax upon clothing which does not appear in any budget, the true importance of which can be gauged only by taking into account the ludicrously insignificant figure of the Russian peasant's average income. This tax, in Witte's theory, is paid "pending the cheapening of goods which will follow from the progress of industrial enterprise." Unfortunately industrial enterprise exhibits only a retrograde development, and these good times never come. Again, if the textile industry—to keep to the same specific instance for the sake of clearness—profited by these 125 million roubles a year, consolation might be found in regarding it as a "patriotic sacrifice." But even this is denied us! Well-nigh half falls directly into the pocket of the Exchequer in the shape of import duties, for importation continues despite all obstacles and Customs' barriers. And why?—because the quality of Russian manufactures is lamentably inferior. Nor is the other moiety of any but the smallest benefit to the manufacturers and the capitalists at their back, because the exorbitant cost of production eats up everything. Very dear, and very bad, is the motto of Russian manufactures.

Needless to observe that it is Protection itself which has contributed to this result. So long as, thanks to it, raw material remains dear, cost of manufacture cannot diminish. Again, on another side, goods cannot become

less costly so long as industry, in its secret springs, depends upon an artificial State organisation in the midst of a social life to which it is repugnant. The artisan can hardly be said to exist. The factory hand is still, and is conscious of being, an agricultural labourer spoiled. As a rule he works in a factory only while on the look-out for an opportunity of getting back to the land. He never learns his work because he has no intention of sticking to it. On all sides vast crowds of workmen leave the industrial centres in spring to work in the fields. The factories replace them by half-trained hands, who, if they learn their work, will probably follow their predecessors' example next year. Every good harvest there comes a scarcity of operatives, and wages go up at an impossible ratio. It has happened before now that important mills have had to close down for whole summers. The results are disastrous. These good agricultural years increase the purchasing powers of the peasantry, while it is precisely in these same years that national industry is disorganised, so that imports from abroad take the place of home products, and the rise in sale prices benefits, by way of Customs duties, the Exchequer and not the manufacturers! To these data in the national psychology, and the consquent inexperience of the labourers resulting from it, must be added the economic ignorance of the manufacturers themselves, and lastly the utter lack of personal initiative deriving on the one hand from the Russian type of mind, and on the other from continual harassing interference of the State, which regards industrial enterprise from first to last as the goose that lays golden eggs for its peculiar benefit.

The aggregate of these conditions, which Witte could not or would not foresee, was bound to result finally in

a state of things where, despite the continual rise in all prices, the manufacturing industries could not any longer cover the expenses of production. The best markets, those ready to pay a good price to get a good article, were recaptured by foreign competitors who turned out better stuff, while the popular outlets, on the other hand, were blocked as a result of the general impoverishment brought about by the necessity under which Witte found himself of extorting more and more formidable amounts from the people for his vast political enterprises. The catastrophe, from which Russia has not yet recovered, was of startling dimensions. Bankruptcies, liquidations, suspensions of payment, were counted by thousands. Of the two and a half milliards of francs furnished by France, three-fourths have melted into thin air. Of 800 millions supplied by Belgium, half a milliard has vanished. More than 200,000 artisans have swelled the ranks of the out-of-work proletariat, while thousands of Russian capitalists have been completely ruined. At the same time—and this was the principal misfortune to the State—the Railway industry, the auxiliary of all the rest, became partly unproductive and threw fresh burdens on the budget. Meantime the unhappy people, groaning beneath their burden of taxation, economised on the most absolute necessaries of existence in order to supply the funds required for the preservation of the imposing façade of Tsardom to the outside world.

Monetary Reforms.

For this end Witte undertook the most energetic measures. But he was enabled to do so only by the ignoring during all these years of financial tricks and turns, of the present needs and the future of the vast

majority of the population, the 120,000,000 agriculturists who really sum up the life of the Russian Nation. The best conceived of these measures was the introduction of the gold standard, designed to establish a fixed rate of exchange between the rouble and foreign monetary units, in order to give Russia the solidity of credit needed to facilitate her commerce with other countries, and above all for purposes of borrowing now and always.

The gold standard, which Witte doubtless looked upon as also immediately productive—if only as a means of constant borrowing—is by way of being the framework of the economic edifice whose pretentious façade conceals the general impoverishment of the country. How was this framework constructed? Its foundation is the reserve retained by the Treasury in order to make possible foreign payments in gold and to exchange bills of credit in circulation directly against gold—the sole international value that is stable. The origin and maintenance of this gold reserve are characteristic of the entire system. It was originally amassed, and is continually added to, solely and entirely by the excess of value of Russian exports over imports. The latter, in fact, are paid for in gold in the international market by Russia—so much gold, that is to say, leaving Russia for other countries. Russian exports on their side are paid for by the foreigners in gold to the Russians; in other words, gold coming into the country. Consequently, if the imports were greater than the exports, the difference would fall in the shape of gold to the foreigner; and Russia would lose so much. If the opposite, the difference accrues to Russia, who gains and keeps the corresponding quantity of gold. Thus for Russia to have a quantity of gold for home dispositions, which, if not uninterruptedly increasing, shall at any rate be stable, it

is indispensable that her exports shall exceed her imports in aggregate value.

Now it has been shown that any export of Russian manufactured articles abroad is impossible; the one and only commodity adapted for export is agricultural produce, particularly cereals of all kinds. It is on the export of cereals, then, that the meretricious structure of the Tsarist *régime* is based. As a matter of fact, the quantities exported are so great that not only has Russia been able to attract gold—both as reserves in the Treasury and in circulation—to the amount of over £120,000,000 representing the excess of exports over total imports, but, further, the legend is universally accredited that a country able to supply such quantities of wheat over and above her domestic needs must be extremely rich, a "world's granary." Yet, while gold flows in, and Russia is partly feeding the industrial nations of the rest of Europe, she herself, a purely agricultural country, is dying of hunger. Here is the evidence.

Agricultural Distress.

Each peasant family—we quote official figures—cultivates on an average seven times more land than in Western Europe. The unexpected result is that the yield of grain per hectare (2½ acres) is 380 kilos., while in other countries it is 1,300. A quarter of the total harvest is used for seed; in civilised countries one-twelfth. Hence, "good average" crops in Russia are famine crops anywhere else. Nay, more, in Western Europe (Germany) the land gives 400 kilos. of cereals, after deducting seed, per head of population, besides which 50 kilos. per head are imported. In Russia, 330 kilos. is the yield, and 80 kilos. are exported; 80 more

are kept back for seed, so that exactly 170 kilos. remain per head per year. The Russian consumes only a trifle over a third of what the inhabitant of Western Europe eats. And meat is a sadly rare article.

These figures give some idea of what the economic condition of the Russian people would be if neither taxes nor export of cereals existed; it would *per se* involve chronic starvation, under-feeding, physiological and mental enfeeblement, with its consequences of epidemics and profound ignorance. Then add the aggravation of this state of things owing to exportation and the wonderful influx of gold—which, unfortunately, cannot be eaten. For twenty years past Russia has been deprived of 170 million tons of cereals of a value of £880,000,000—more than £40,000,000 per annum. And the confidential reports of the medical service, which the author has perused with horror, declare explictly and in so many words that "the consumption of bread is habitually some 30 per cent. below the quantity physiologically necessary to preserve the vital force of an adult"! It must be further added that the diminution of stock for the last twenty years (horses 20 per cent., calves 40 per cent., sheep 71 per cent., pigs 87 per cent., cows 50 per cent.) completes the picture.

We may well ask with surprise and horror how it is possible that the peasants under such conditions are willing to sell their wheat, to die of hunger? The explanation is that the State needs these exports, and its power is irresistible. Government forces the peasants to stint themselves of their food by applying the screw of fiscal pressure. It exacts the payment of innumerable direct and indirect taxes, and that in ready money. If, even, the Government would accept payment in kind, the peasant, though none the less deprived

of his staple necessary, would be able to save something. The State would sell his wheat, so that at any rate he would escape the middleman. As things are, he cannot. To get the money to pay his taxes, the cultivator, ignorant of the state of the markets, isolated from the rest of the world by lack of means of communication, itself a calamity, has to sell his crops to unscrupulous speculators at prices that are more scandalous the more remote he is from the great commercial centres. There is nothing else for him to do, as he must pay his taxes —direct taxes, to avoid seizure by the revenue authorities, with condemnation to the knout by the mayor of his village into the bargain, indirect, because he requires certain articles of primary necessity, one and all subject to heavy duties.

It is a vicious circle—tragic in its consequences! The peasant's hunger maintains the standard of gold; the gold standard maintains the credit of the Government; Government credit is able to borrow mad sums to make specious exhibitions of Russian might—a great army, territorial expansion, Turkestan, Manchuria. And these loans, by the interest payable on them, as well as by the costly and fantastic schemes accomplished by their means, swell the load of hunger that crushes the unhappy peasant yet further.

IMPOVERISHMENT.

The full horror of the "brilliant" picture of Russian prosperity is, however, not manifest until we see the use made of the pittance which the peasants scrape together by starving their bellies. This is how they spend it under the most fortunate circumstances.

A "rich" peasant family (seven persons) of the

government of Riazan) has 400 roubles (something over £40) a year to dispose of, one-half of which is represented by the corn used for domestic consumption. Of the other moiety, the household consumes, in round numbers, £2 15s. od. on alcohol, nearly £3 on sugar, £2 10s. od. on tea, 10s. on petroleum, 4s. on tobacco; which sums include the following indirect duties: £2 11s. od. on alcohol, 17s. on sugar, £1 5s. od. on tea, 2s. 6d. on petroleum, 1s. on tobacco! Add £2 10s. od. of direct taxes, and £3 5s. od. arrears of payment for the land surrendered to the peasants after the abolition of serfdom. Finally count in the 50 per cent. of "latent" imposts on manufactured articles—tools, clothes, boots and shoes, etc.—under the form of Customs duties or their equivalents giving a premium to Russian industrial enterprise, and it is clear that these unfortunates spend half the money that goes through their hands in taxes!

It is obvious that with this system of "skinning to the quick," not the smallest reserve is left the peasant to apply to the bettering of his methods of production. Not only does the State take his food from him, but worse, it makes it an impossibility for him to make arrangements for better future production. So true is this that, for instance, after a "middling" harvest (middling from the Russian standpoint), the peasant is frequently unable to procure the grain required to grow a better. This was part cause of a famine of several years' duration in the Northern provinces, the plain fact, officially admitted, being that "the seed from the previous year, which the peasants employed to sow their fields, was not ripe or suitable for the purpose!" In other districts loss of draft cattle, lack of implements, and a hundred other similar causes produce the same result, bad harvest and famine, more particularly famine,

since the wheat has to be grown for sale, and the taxes paid as punctually as ever.

Does Government pay no heed to this primary and all-important question,—improvement of agricultural methods? It is perfectly well aware that it is not at all the meteorological conditions, but simply the artificial obstacles put in the way of solving the difficulty, that cause famines. Ah, yes, it cares! When a famine-struck district has been depopulated by hunger and epidemics for several years running, the people are supplied with corn and good seed,—as a loan, of course. In this way the total indebtedness of the rural *communes* is still further increased. And as it is precisely the standing impossibility of facing, even with good harvests, the most indispensable expenses, which prevents the peasants from improving things, and which in consequence precipitates famine, this spurious "charity" only aggravates the seriousness of the situation.

There exists indeed the *Crédit Agricole*, which should provide the peasantry with funds necessary for making improvements. Witte, struck with the horrors of the situation at the moment when his industrial illusions were breaking up, looked, as anyone else would have done in his place, for salvation from this source, and organised the *Crédit Agricole*. Only, how give credit to men already over head and ears in debt, without assets and mentally incapable even of taking advantage of modern apparatus? How could Russian agriculture, more primitive in its methods than that of almost any other part of the world, be transformed rapidly enough to guarantee the repayment of agricultural loans, even at long terms of years? A prudent policy was adopted. During a period of five years exactly 281 loans were granted, the total amount being £120,000, among a

peasant population of at least 100 millions! The aggregate assistance afforded by this agency would just suffice to give each Russian peasant in need of help the magnificent capital sum of—one halfpenny!

The results of the total neglect with which the peasant has been treated are plain to see. Debt, want of implements, fiscal burdens, have reached such a pitch that neither good harvest nor bad makes the smallest difference in the general situation. In bad years, the suffering is something more severe; in good years everything available is swept off to pay the arrears of the bad years.

The state to which the richest regions come may be seen from the specific instance of the district of Balacheff, where the harvest of 1903 was very good, as it was in the whole province of Saratoff in which the district in question is included. The particulars are official, having been published in a report issued by the Provincial Assembly.

With an ordinary, average harvest, the population of this province is already 216 million kilos. of wheat short, simply to cover the consumption of bread and the payment of taxes, to say nothing of clothing, lodging, and more elaborate needs. To supply this deficit, the inhabitants have recourse to commerce, fishing, and so on, but with no very conspicuous success. Now, side by side with this general deficit for the province as a whole, there is in the district of Balacheff, a peculiarly favoured area included within the other, a surplus of wheat amounting to 192 kilos. per head. The gross receipts of the rural administration of the district are 5,120,000 roubles (£512,000), which makes 18·15 roubles per head of population.

Now how are these handsome revenues (from the

Russian point of view) of £2 average per head employed? In the first place, the District has to pay 415,000 roubles by way of communal taxes, imposed by the local administration of the *Zemstvos*, to be described on a subsequent page; besides this, 197,000 roubles go for various territorial dues (farming out, forests, &c.), making in all 612,000 roubles for local charges. From the balance of gross receipts, 4,608,000 roubles, the State imposts must then be deducted under the following heads: direct taxes (land-tax and payments to the Treasury in redemption of lands), 522,000 roubles; indirect contributions (customs, spirits, tobacco, matches, petroleum, sugar), 1,565,000 roubles—a total of 2,087,000 roubles paid to the State. The total revenue thus comes down to 2,421,000 roubles, the District paying 53 p.c. of its gross revenues in taxation! Result, there is left per head the ridiculous income of 8 roubles 55 kopeks, exactly 18*s.* 3*d.* per head. Out of this grotesquely inadequate amount the inhabitant of this favoured district must supply all his wants beyond mere food—clothing, boots and shoes, lodging, household necessaries, tools and implements, feed of stock, debts, interest on debts, intellectual needs, and everything else.

We stand doubtful and disturbed before this heart-breaking picture of the condition of the richest district in a province counting as one of the most prosperous in all Russia. But our doubt changes to amazement when we face the incontrovertible fact that it is taxation that brings the people to this appalling state of wretchedness. We are lost in admiration at the genius of Witte, who has built up the dazzling edifice of Russian wealth on this foundation of famine. This is all there is to show for the augmentation by 400 millions of roubles

(£40,000,000), of the revenues of the Empire, which that mighty economist has effected. Since the bold turn of the screw in 1893, in his first accession to power, he has grown more and more daring. Note his more important measures: increase of Customs and the Tax on sugar, institution of tax on rents, spirit monopoly, unreasonable increase of patent charges; further, the "war taxes" imposed under pretext of the Chinese campaign of 1900, *viz.*, increase of excise in beer and alcohol, increase of 50 p.c. on seals affixed to bottles of spirit, increase of tobacco duty, supplementary dues on cheap brandy intended for consumption by the common people—none of which burdens have been removed since the war in question came to an end. The effect produced is even more striking. Consumption has actually not increased as fast as taxation. In the case of sugar, the nutritive value of which is undeniable, taxation has risen by 150 p.c., consumption being 75 p.c. only. Petroleum shows a still more disastrous ratio, consumption having advanced by 45 p. c., while duties in this article of prime necessity have risen nearly threefold, that is 120 p.c. Things are just as bad with imports from abroad; the total value of these has grown under the Witte *régime* 47 p.c., while Customs charges have risen 70 p.c. Analogous facts can be proved for matches, tobacco, alcoholic products, in fact for all articles taxed—and there is scarcely one that is not. The inevitable conclusion is that Witte's wondrous fiscal policy, specifically intended to develop the purchasing power of the population, the natural riches of the country, industry, commerce, stability of the finances of the State, has moved in a vicious circle much to be deplored, and has brought about exactly the opposite of the results desired—universal stagnation,

and the diminution of ability to consume on the part of the vast majority of the people.

An Exhausted Nation.

What, therefore, could be more intelligible than the economic crisis under which the entire nation is suffering? And what more certain than the definitive and not merely temporary collapse of Russian industry? This is the result of the more and more depressed level, not of the wants, but of the purchasing powers of the people; and it could only be obviated by an improvement of well-being among the agricultural population which is rendered impossible by the fiscal system, itself again only the inevitable corollary of the policy of Tsarism. It was only quite at the last, a few months only before his surrender of the Portfolio of Finance, that "the man who made Russia rich," was forced to acknowledge the utter impossibility of extracting anything more from a people that was dying by inches; at any rate, he had the courage to say so at the very moment when the military and official Oligarchy was demanding a further provision of enormous sums to continue its work of warlike expansion in the Far East. The proof he has furnished of the degree of exhaustion to which the people has sunk is infinitely suggestive. It refers to the payment of the annual instalments which the serfs enfranchised in 1861 have, for a term of forty-nine years, to contribute to the Exchequer in redemption of the purchase moneys of the lands surrendered by the feudal nobles—moneys the full amount of which the State originally advanced to the former owners. The round sum so advanced by Government reaches an aggregate of 754 million roubles (£75,400,000). The

bonds issued by the Treasury for this amount were to constitute a special loan to be paid off by the annual instalments for which the peasants were liable. But from 1885 onwards these annual payments came in badly. To conceal the fact, these bonds were simply thrown in with the general public debt, and the instalments treated as an ordinary budgetary receipt; they became officially a temporary impost. But all the same, payment remained in abeyance; and arrears accumulated to a more and more serious extent. After the famine of 1891, these arrears already amounted to fifty millions of roubles. Then began Witte's era, with its taxes, its gold standard, its improved means of production and communication. Harvests were good; but to everyone's amazement the arrears grew and grew at a dizzy rate of increase. Soon the peasant could not pay another kopek; and in 1902 the arrears rose to the alarming total of 237 million roubles (£23,780,000)! Only a third of the total advances has been made good in forty years. Is it to be expected, national impoverishment continuing to increase, that the peasants should pay £50,000,000 during the nine years left to run? The arrears annually increased by millions of pounds sterling, proving that the peasants, far from paying off arrears, were not capable even of meeting the current imposts. Nor was it out of any indulgence, we may be sure, that the Revenue authorities had suffered the enormous growth of these debts, but simply and solely because they could find nothing more to lay hands upon. The fact could not be gainsaid—fresh exactions were out of the question.

From this time Witte advocated a vast scheme of peasant reforms; but this would have broken up the war policy and the financial arrangements of the

reactionary Oligarchy, and he was unceremoniously shown the door. (It may be mentioned incidentally, as a piquant detail, that a "declaration of favour" from the Tsar was issued in the summer of 1904, "remitting to the peasants the arrears due on the annual instalments of redemption." All this cheap bit of magnanimity implies is an official avowal of the impossibility of ever recovering the sixty million pounds owing from the peasants. Nor have the people reaped any real advantage from this "gracious act," for . . . they find themselves already face to face with fresh arrears. In one word, the rescript in question has put the official seal on the bankruptcy of forty years' economic administration.

Motives underlying Fiscal Oppression.

If we inquire into the psychological reasons that led Witte and his collaborators to create—involuntarily indeed—the appalling situation just outlined, we must carefully distinguish between economic intentions and political necessities. So far as the former are concerned, it is obvious enough that Witte desired Russia to take the gigantic stride from an Oriental country, living essentially upon the spontaneous yield of its soil, to a modern nation with elaborate wants and provided with the apparatus necessary to supply them; a great enhancement of the general well-being should have resulted, while the simultaneous formation was expected of an important class midway between the governmental and the peasant worlds, as also a beneficial development of the intelligence of the masses. Could this intention (omitting altogether for the moment the chronic increase of taxation) have been realised?

Undoubtedly it could, on condition of limiting the exportation of wheat. But such a limitation would have rendered the establishment of the gold standard out of the question, and this alone could guarantee the stability of Russia's international economic relations. So here, too, the final result would have been far from satisfactory.

Witte was able to create all the necessary modern plant by means of the money borrowed from France. Was there any real need for him to resort to these terrible imposts to set this apparatus in active use? Emphatically no. But his system was faulty from its basis, because he could not follow a purely economic policy. His economic system could only form the auxiliary of the general Tsarian policy, serving the ends of the Oligarchy delineated above. Its claim to make the national economy the pivot of the life of the State immediately collided with the principles governing Tsardom. Even the most favourable results he could have anticipated, increase of popular well-being and diffusion of knowledge, constituted in the eyes of the ruling Powers aims that were positively revolutionary. To set up in face of the old bureaucratic omnipotence, two grand new forces—economic energy and universal education—was to pronounce the death-sentence of the existing *régime*. Hence from the first a life-and-death struggle, now openly violent, now of stealthy intrigue, was waged by the reactionary Oligarchy against this upstart who pursued side-issues in dangerous independence.

The development of the economic situation might have gone on almost entirely apart from the *régime* of administrative oppression; first and foremost, therefore, it was incumbent on the Oligarchy to secure control over it, and deflect it into channels more profitable to its own

purposes. It is the political needs of this Oligarchy which, by their astounding spread, have led inevitably to the merciless application of the fiscal turn-screw. Witte was compelled to drop into line, first, to save himself from falling a victim to the sinister machinations of his adversaries; secondly, to keep the prestige of Russia intact, embarked as she now was on all-important enterprises. Indeed it was essential to enhance the country's credit still further, so as to confirm and strengthen in advance the great economic effort on which he counted, as also to be in a position to carry out the vast schemes of economic expansion which he fostered, and which he hoped to realise by an adroit appeal at once to the greedy instincts of his opponents and to the megalomanaic prepossessions of the Tsar. These schemes are what actually precipitated the revolutionary catastrophe; these more than anything else—more even than the general impoverishment, more than the unchecked and arbitrary tyranny of the Bureaucracy, have brought the nation to a consciousness that the energies of the *régime* it endures are concentrated on objects utterly foreign to its own proper life.

Policy of Expansion.

It has already been pointed out that the idea of Russian expansion across Asia, the idea of territorial conquests, dominated Government circles at the period when Witte took the reins. This idea formed the bond connecting the new Minister with the special world into which he was entering. To it he owes his brilliant career—to it the final checkmate of his whole system. This idea, however, did not present itself in quite the same light to him as to the two powers with which he

had to reckon—the vacillating will of the Tsar, and the absorbing interests of the Oligarchy, which had already laid violent hands on pretty well all the great administrative departments of the State.

Alexander III., when Vychnegradski avowed the impossibility of finding funds available for fresh enterprises on a large scale, set himself, with his usual short-sighted obstinacy, to look for a man who would undertake, despite the scarcity of money, to carry out the mighty scheme of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Witte undertook the task, and was appointed Minister. The Tsar and his brothers, who lived entirely under the empire of dynastic "traditions," were hypnotised by the old idea, falsely attributed to Peter the Great, that Russia must obtain an outlet on the open sea.

The invalidation by the Congress of Berlin of the fruits of her victory over Turkey had excluded Russia from the Mediterranean. Henceforward, mastery of the Pacific became a positive mania with people who, poring over small scale maps of the world, misconceived the distances, and entirely failed to realise that old Russia has in reality no point of contact, and still less any community of interests, with the almost uninhabited lands beyond Siberia. They coveted the Far East in the name of "historical sequence." Psychologically, this tendency, which has never been in any sense natural to Russia, but is solely a dynastic aspiration, has a much simpler explanation. It is merely, under another form, the usual mental attitude of the landed proprietor, peasant or otherwise, characterised all the world over by a desire to "round off" his property, to enlarge it and get hold of adjacent territory. The Tsars, regarding themselves as the essential proprietors of the soil occupied by their subjects, foster the same

desire, and, therefore, lend themselves readily to all schemes of territorial aggrandisement.

The expansionist tendencies of the bureaucratic Oligarchy, on the other hand, were explained above as motived by a desire for military glory, possibilities of jobbery, &c., and the possible contingency of a patriotic diversion which could be played off against the awakening of the national self-consciousness. We have also seen how Nicholas II. was influenced in the same direction by this group in the course of the journey round the world, which coincided with Witte's assumption of office.

The latter, an enthusiastic admirer of English economic methods, and particularly of their system of commercial colonisation, looked at Asiatic expansion in quite another light. In its amalgamation with his system for "intensifying the industrial life of the nation," he saw a further possibility of securing for Russia, now a manufacturing country, vast outlets for her products—outlets better to be relied on perhaps than any existing within her own borders. He proclaimed himself the apostle of economic expansion. At the outset the requirements of the latter were precisely the same as those of the military or political expansion favoured by the Tsar and the upper ranks of the Bureaucracy. Improved means of communication were wanted—the Trans-Siberian Railway. Thus Witte was only doing what might have been expected of him in carrying through that enterprise.

The Franco-Russian alliance, the accumulation of the gold reserve, the budgetary surpluses, gave him the credit necessary to begin the colossal task in virtue of the loans supplied from French savings. Even this first stage on the road of expansion, however, involved him in the necessity of fiscal pressure, destined to grow heavier

year by year. In fact, payment of interest to lenders called for more and more formidable sums, which were soon to rise in 1903 to a total of £32,000,000, a liability Russia could not possibly meet out of her ordinary revenue receipts. On the other side, very large accessory expenses inevitably accompanied the progress of the works. Costs of primary installation were covered by French loans, but the plant had to be provided, to say nothing of *employés* and officials—not only technical, but also administrative, for police, &c.; the convoy of starving peasants from Russia proper was a heavy charge; new organisations, fiscal and otherwise, had necessarily to be set up in the countries "opened up" by the new line; while, an inevitable consequence in a State organised on a military basis, the armed forces were constantly increased. Seeing the railway remained utterly unremunerative, all this was so much dead loss to the Treasury, which accordingly set to work to make the taxpayer defray the expenses of expansion.

Economic expansion, with its marvellous advantages, could evidently only begin with the completion of direct communication between the Pacific and Europe! Meantime expenses increased out of all reason, partly owing to the difficulties encountered, partly from the peculation organised on an enormous scale. Witte resorted more and more to the device of "extraordinary budgets," contriving to show the world a series of smiling financial pictures, by setting down all the deficits of the general budget under the head of expenses of primary installation, and covering these by the necessary "Treasury assets available," which were nothing more nor less than the borrowed capital. These budgets went up by leaps and bounds—to attain in 1903 a figure of over £20,000,000.

THE RUSSO-CHINESE EMPIRE.

Witte thus, for several years, played into the hands of the Oligarchy, at least in Asia. In Europe, on the contrary, his policy of industrial intensification was so dangerous to the Bureaucracy that the latter tried every means of getting rid of him. He was creating an industrial proletariat, alienating the peasantry, pampering the *bourgeois!* So difficult was the situation, that in 1896, when Goremykine was Minister of the Interior under the auspices of the Oligarchy, he had to break back, and only kept the hunt at bay by sending in to the Tsar, against his own convictions, a report advocating so violently reactionary a measure that Plehve himself, as well as Pobiedonostseff, dared not support it—the virtual suppression, to wit, of all the local powers of the *Zemstvos*. In this fashion he secured two years' peace. But during that interval his conceptions of economic expansion were completely transmogrified.

The paralysis of the manufacturing industry he had set going proved conclusively that Russia would be incapable of supplying the outlets opened up in Asia. The habits he had formed, thanks to the preponderant part he played in the maintenance of Russian prestige, of almost despotically directing both the economic life, and the foreign policy of the Empire, had, moreover, launched him on the ocean of external politics. The new horizons opened to him by the consequences of the Chino-Japanese War, as well as a more profound insight into the immense social and commercial superiority of the Chinese, enticed him into the grandiose conception of a vast Russo-Chinese Empire, in which Northern China would be to

European Russia what in France the industrial and manufacturing North is to the agricultural South. From that day the realisation of this daydream dominated Witte's ceaseless activity.

The economist became a statesman, the statesman aspired to become an empire-builder. As Benvenuto Cellini threw his pewter plates into the melting-pot to complete the casting of the *Perseus*, so Witte tossed everything he could lay hands on into the abyss that separated him from his dream. In the accomplishment of his gigantic task, he overlooked the mass of poverty and wretchedness that was accumulating. He saw himself a conquering hero. For the time, in view of his new ideal of world expansion, he required the concentration of all possible resources, economic, financial, political, diplomatic—some to win fresh conquests, others to keep them. His methods were marvels of precision, energy and adroitness. Yet he essentially remained throughout what he had always been, an economist, a shrewd financier, a master of astute negotiation. This he utilised in all quarters and under all circumstances—in France, to raise capital, in England, to secure freedom from interference, in Germany, to stop the Kaiser from intruding on his sphere of activity, in China to impose himself as protector in chief against all and everyone, Europeans, Japanese, secret societies, Buddhist monks, receiving payment for these Platonic services in scraps of territory, —the nuclei of territorial possessions that were to lead up to the future amalgamation of the two richest Empires in the world. Besides—his master-stroke!—he remained all along the absolute and persistent opponent of violence. He only threatened military intervention, careful never really to endanger the eventual

union of the different peoples by any resort to brute force. This few years of feverish activity, of intense and all-embracing energy to so extraordinary a degree, afford a wonderful instance of individual force. At last the moment arrived when, after setting a calamitous blunder of the military oligarchy to rights, Witte could reasonably look for the slow and gradual realisation of his dreams of pacific annexation.

INTERVENTION OF THE OLIGARCHY.

But the catastrophe was at hand! The critical symptom, the plague of national poverty and wretchedness, grew and spread apace, the while Witte's power—it were mockery to say the Tsar's—weighed more heavily upon Eastern Asia.

The mirage of a world empire, of which China should be the industrial centre, made him regard Russian industry, his own child, with contemptuous pity, and his sympathies came back to the neglected and downtrodden peasants. Abhorring military violence, abandoning the notion of economic invasion, now impracticable, he had only one weapon left for the execution of his plans—words, diplomacy. These he employed more skilfully, perhaps, than ever statesman before him. But nowadays words fall on deaf ears unless there is brute force behind them. Diplomacy summoned the army, and the military and bureaucratic caste, living on brute force, saw the moment coming when, by pushing through, and passing beyond, the movement originated by Witte, contrary to his wishes, it could make the appeal to arms inevitable, and involve the fall of the man who had done more than any other to create a modern middle-class in

Russia, and to rouse the spirit of revolt against a *régime* wrapped up in undertakings of which the remote profits existed only in the fancy of their inaugurators.

Witte, reduced to dependence on his diplomatic subtlety alone, face to face with a more and more excited condition of foreign feeling, brought the general policy of the Empire into conformity with new principles. To maintain Russia's moral prestige in Europe and in those parts of Asia which she was coveting, to steer clear of all provocation of Foreign States, to safeguard the future by the simple avoidance of internal and external crises, to build up and consolidate a more than ever dazzling rampart about the country, pending the amalgamation of Russia with Northern China—a union which, on the basis of results accomplished, would come about almost spontaneously in due course—such were the aims of his last period of political activity. Peace, financial sagacity, peasant colonisation, relinquishment to others of industrial enterprise and administrative influence in Asia, peasant reform, moral purification of the powers that be, natural development, spontaneous cure of the economic fever in the country—such were the pre-conditions essential to the success of this wise and prudent policy—the only one capable of avoiding internal and external disaster.

But these were precisely the conditions which meant checkmate, failure, and annihilation for the oligarchical *régime* which worked alongside him and beneath him, and which he had debarred from the omnipotence it had coveted for the last ten years! In departments in which Witte could not intervene, this *régime* had paraded its growing influence and growing effrontery with impunity. Civil administration, public instruction, administration of justice, religious observance, management of the navy, and

to a large extent of the army also, had fallen into its hands. Everywhere it had superadded to the righteous indignation of a starving people the equally righteous fury of a nation robbed of its rights, of justice and of education, a nation reduced to the most humiliating slavery to the countless petty tyrants of the magistracy, the police, the clergy, who were merely the servile instruments to carry out the sentences of the oligarchical associations directed by Plehve, Pobiedonostseff, Muravieff, the Grand Dukes and the Moscow Group. Nay, even where Witte ruled as a virtual dictator, the influence of this underground coalition made itself felt at times by the mouth of Nicholas II., terrorised by his mother, his sister, or his uncles. Witte, was, and is still, the best hated and the worst feared man at Court. The Tsar feels a positive terror before his superiority, and would rather read his reports than discuss matters with him. The brainless Court world has turned his private life into a handle against him, and declares him "impossible." He had the boldness, the effrontery, to marry a woman who was not only divorced—Society winks at many curious domestic arrangements, *ménages à trois*, *ménages à cinquante* if needs be, provided they are "regular"—but was of Jewish descent, and, moreover, had the unpardonable fault of possessing intellectual abilities in a *milieu* where imbecility is the one thing needful. Accordingly she has never been received; and Witte has since then adopted a scornful attitude towards Court circles, which isolates him absolutely. His attitude is admirable, but dangerous in the midst of a society bound together by a thousand ties of intrigue.

Triumph of Reaction.

On the death of the Chancellor Lobanoff, Witte was supposed to have lost his influence over foreign policy, the Oligarchy having succeeded, after a brief interregnum, in installing one of its unprovided members in office—the brother, the worthy brother, of the destroyer of justice, Muravieff. But his influence still preponderated to such a degree that Muravieff could not establish his policy. The first time, indeed, that he set himself by a dark intrigue to reverse the system of pacific expansion proved fatal to him. This was in 1900 at the time of the Boxer rising in China. The Oligarchy believed that the time had come to ratify its own particular conception of expansion by plunging into a warlike expedition, involving enormous opportunities for jobbery. Witte had already taken skilful precautions for the protection of the Chinese dynasty, at the same time securing guarantees for an adequate *quid pro quo*; but Muravieff spoiled the whole scheme by insisting on the international expedition. Witte explained the folly of the thing to the Tsar, and Muravieff poisoned himself next day. The military occupation of Manchuria was carried out nevertheless; and though Witte saved his policy in China from shipwreck, this nevertheless constituted his first serious check. The Oligarchy, on the other hand, scored its first triumph in Asia, and found itself well on the road to substitute military conquest for pacific expansion.

Apart from Witte, two high dignitaries only held aloof from the reactionary conspiracy, the Minister of War, Kuropatkin, and the successor of the dead Muravieff, Count Lamsdorff. These three, between them, constituted for yet another three years a last rampart of true

government against the concentrated assaults of a group, whose only dream was to replace administration by an organised monopoly of tyranny and jobbery. These three years were filled with a bitter, ruthless struggle, under cover of which the country was progressing towards revolution in proportion with the successes of the Oligarchy. For the reactionaries won inevitably; they held the best cards. Witte's policy, moreover, had culminated in such a situation that only the sternest repression, the "white terror," seemed to the terror-stricken Nicholas capable of safeguarding the aristocracy against liberal aspirations fostered by the creation of the industry of an organised proletariat at home, while abroad pacific expansion had reached a limit where the slightest provocation might give occasion for a glorious military achievement.

Thus military enterprise, covert at first, but growing more and more open and unblushing, began in Asia to preponderate over diplomacy and economic activity; while in Russia the most brutal reaction against the even more bitterly exasperated masses once more threw all questions of material progress into the background. Popular hatred was no longer aimed at those men who starved the people, but at those who had made economic failure inevitable by refusing the masses the means of improving their condition; its objective was not Witte, but the Oligarchy, which deliberately organised the true causes of its wretchedness—ignorance and injustice. Bogoliepoff, a creature of the Grand Duke Serge, Minister of Public Instruction, peculiarly odious for the obstacles he put in the way of higher education, was killed by a shot from a revolver. Repression became harsher, the Oligarchy more powerful. Sipiaguine, another creature of Serge, Minister of the Interior, met

the like fate. And then the Oligarchy reached its apogee under Plehve's guidance, when at last the latter seized the reins of power. The crowning period, and the most terrible, of Bureaucratic autocracy dawned. The absolute cessation of the impetus which Witte had imparted to the internal and external life of the State coincides with this period. This was no accident. A living organism would have combated the infection. Only a dead organism could tolerate the domination and triumph of a *régime* which is to the State what putrefaction is to a corpse.

PLEHVE AS DICTATOR.

A section of the Oligarchy itself deprecated the open encouragements which Plehve's supremacy—his monstrous past was proof sufficient—could not fail to give to bureaucratic corruption. They feared the diminution of Russia's moral prestige abroad, and the enhancement of popular odium; while there were particular individuals among them who dreaded for themselves the insolent irresponsibility and intriguing police methods of a Minister who inspired as much terror as contempt. But apprehension of the infuriated nation mastered these fears of the terrible police official; Plehve was deemed the only man capable of stamping out the reign of terror which was beginning to assert itself. The Grand Dukes forced him upon the Tsar against the wish of nearly all the high functionaries, who were not, like them, safe from his machinations. And as a matter of fact, Pobiedonostseff was Plehve's first victim. The Procurator of the Holy Synod had a horror of the man who had been nominated to succeed the murdered

Sipiaguine, and he protested vigorously against his appointment.

"I protest," he said, "against the fellow who has tried three different religions the better to get on the side of the strongest; if the Jews were in power, he would turn Jew to-morrow. He is a man without principle—necessary, if you will, but who should be confined to duties where he can be checked." Plehve was, nevertheless, appointed. At first he endeavoured to creep into Pobiedonostseff's good graces by the device of winning over the Holy Synod. He made a retreat of a week in the Alexander Nevski Monastery, to expiate his sins! But the farce, which the whole Orthodox Press reprobated directly, only exasperated Pobiedonostseff. Then Plehve changed his tactics, and the once omnipotent Procurator found himself ousted from his preponderant status, after Plehve had shown the Tsar, by fraudulent reports, that he alone was master of police control sufficient to hold in check the revolutionary groups.

Plehve's governmental action—later, we shall see its effect on the people—was summed up in one procedure —the installation of members of the Oligarchy not yet placed in the few chief offices of administration still filled by "outsiders." The unquestioned omnipotence of the group, and subsequently the making of capital, financial and moral—if we dare say so—out of all departments of the State, constituted the real aim followed. His policy involved in the first place the fall of the three Ministers outside the clique, *viz.*, Witte, Lamsdorff and Kuropatkin; secondly, the substitution of military expansion in Asia for diplomatic action and gradual colonisation, in order to secure three objects—military glory, chances of peculation, and a patriotic diversion of

the popular discontent; lastly, steady administrative pressure in the direction of the total stifling of any manifestation of popular grievances and of advisers competent to guide the people or the Tsar. The system may be exemplified by one or two definite instances.

One day, old Prince Metcherski, editor of the *Grajdanine*, and a personal friend of Alexander III., a man whose boast it is to hold the record of reactionary ideas, was disgusted to see himself outpaced by Plehve's right-hand, the Imperial Councillor Platonoff. He ran to his friend Plehve and asked him why everything was censored now, down to the mere business discussions in the Town Council of St. Petersburg. He insisted upon the order being rescinded.

"It is utterly impossible," Plehve told him, with a view of covering Platonoff.

"But why?"

"Because these Boards often include intelligent men, quite capable of proving to the representatives of authority that they are in the wrong. Such things tend to shake the respect due to the Government."

The character of the *régime* comes out still more typically in another incident of the same date (1902), when the irreconcilable antagonism between Plehve and Witte was displayed for the first time in a dangerous shape. In the provinces of the South-West, particularly those of Poltava and Chernigoff, there was an alarming peasant outbreak.

The starving people had attacked and pillaged the seats of the great landed proprietors, in order to distribute the stocks of wheat therein accumulated. Prince Obolenski, entrusted with the task of restoring order (for which he paid later by a revolver shot from the peasant

Katchura, although subsequently promoted by the Tsar to the dignity of Governor-General of Finland), had found no better method than that of flogging the peasants, guilty and innocent alike, till the blood came, and issuing *an express order* to his Cossacks to violate their women. The situation, originating in the famine and the arbitrary action of the local authorities, was very serious. Plehve concealed the facts from foreign eyes, in a very ingenious manner. He had broad sheets printed and signed by a non-existent revolutionary committee, in which he incorporated a *ukase*—of course fictitious—from the Tsar, directing the peasants to divide the lands of the great proprietors amongst themselves. Next, he had these manifestoes "seized," and appealed to their contents to prove to an astonished world that the Russian peasant is more fervently Tsarian than ever, and that the Revolutionaries, to lead the people astray, are forced to make use of the Tsar's name! The trick found some dupes in Western Europe, but none in Russia.

The Government was, indeed, so alarmed at this first symptom of peasant revolt that it seriously began to consider what general measures should be adopted. A Special Council was convened, its debates being carried through in a most suggestive fashion.

Those present were: Pobiedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod; Plehve, Minister of the Interior; Witte, Minister of Finance; Kuropatkin, Minister of War. The order of the day was: Measures entailed by the agricultural disturbances; declaration of ministers' opinion on the social outlook.

KUROPATKIN.—We cannot go on like this for more than four years. After that the Army cannot hold out.

WITTE.—We can manage for six years, if we are amenable in the matter of imposts.

POBIEDONOSTSEFF.—Perhaps for ten years, if we succeed in clericalising education.

PLEHVE.—Possibly even for twelve years, if I publish some Manifestoes containing promises for a distant date, the fulfilment of which can be postponed still longer.

Upon this followed a lively scene. Witte reproached Plehve for advocating a policy which, on his own showing, would lead to nothing. The Tsar, when the facts were put before him, was within an ace of agreeing with Witte. But the Empress-Dowager intervened, and saved (or rather lost) the situation.

From this time Witte washed his hands of events in Russia, and occupied himself exclusively with financial administration and with the direction of affairs in Asia. Kuropatkin and Lamsdorff prudently refrained from any debatable action on the territory of internal politics. But for Asiatic affairs the case was different. After the China Campaign of 1900, Witte had succeeded by a series of diplomatic manœuvres in keeping up Russian prestige and the interests of Russia at the Court of Peking. But he was unable, in face of the underhand conduct of the Oligarchy, to arrange matters in the same way with Japan. His reiterated attempts to frustrate the projects of Li-Hung-Chang, who wanted to embroil Russia and Japan, in order to strengthen the hands of China, failed. The pivot of these efforts, in fact, could only be a Convention, if not an Alliance, with Japan. And that was precisely what the Oligarchy dreaded: it would have been the triumph of Witte's System.

Powerful arguments were accordingly brought forward, to convince the Tsar of the inanity of this system:

the economic expansion of Russia did not exist as yet for the Far East; military prestige alone availed there. Alexeieff, whose connection with the Oligarchy has already been shown, was in chief command of the Naval Forces of the Pacific. A symbolic fight took place between him and Witte, round the two key positions of Russia on the Yellow Sea: Port Arthur, the symbol of military force; Dalny, symbolic of economic strength. This latter city, artificial, magnificent, its foundation having withal cost hundreds of millions (stolen for the most part), had remained lifeless; its commerce was *nil*. And the Tsar readily accepted the reasoning of Alexeieff who affirmed that not Dalny, but Port Arthur, was the representative seat of Russian Power, where the Tsar's "Proconsul" should have his residence.

Further, it was absolutely impossible for Witte to convince the Tsar of the folly of the Manchurian Invasion of 1900. In the eyes of Nicholas, the military occupation was a *fait accompli*, symbol of a definite taking possession. That this occupation signified the spoliation of China and a direct challenge to Japan, mattered to him the less, in that he believed his military force to be superior to that of those two "half-civilised" nations.

From this moment, Witte was constrained to the defensive; his sole hope was to countermine the fatal projects of the Oligarchy. It was at this time that he demonstrated to the Tsar the impossibility of laying fresh burdens on the shoulders of the people. He even went so far as to say that the appeal to patriotic sacrifice would not succeed for eventualities to come, the Nation being absolutely indifferent to expansion in the direction of the Pacific. The Tsar showed great displeasure at this observation, and declared that there

was no danger of military complications. Witte summoned Kuropatkin and Lamsdorff to the rescue. The one proved, documents in hand, that Japan was preparing for war; the other cited his diplomatic despatches as evidence that the whole Universe was anticipating a catastrophe, in which Russia would remain isolated. The proofs of the one were invalidated by the reports of Alexeieff, who submitted his grandiloquent lucubrations by the hand of Plehve, in order to convince the Tsar of his own strength and of the despicable weakness of Japan. The despatches of the second were successfully refuted by the occult diplomatic service organised by Plehve. The Tsar hesitated for some time. The Oligarchy was on thorns: had it lost its ascendency with the Crown?

Witte, Kuropatkin, and Lamsdorff, Witte's ultimate creation, were still holding their ground. It was more necessary than ever to get hold of the Tsar himself. Plehve, as Minister of the Interior, was something; Wahl and Kleigels, creatures of Plehve and of the Empress-Dowager, holding high positions, were also valuable assets. But at the Court a younger set were reigning; Vanlialarski's ladies were older than they had been. Pobiedonostseff saw himself superseded by Plehve, and the Empress-Dowager, as reactionary as he could wish, was too autocratic to permit herself to be utilised for other ends than her own omnipotence. A new card was required at the Court. It was found in the person of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch, who, out of pure hatred to Witte, did not hesitate to throw himself head foremost into the cause of the New Oligarchy. And what a recruit! He had, as everyone knows, espoused the Emperor's sister, a sister who is above all her mother's daughter, that is to say, the

representative of the ideas of Pobiedonostseff. And it is she who has till now, among all who have access to the Tsar, had the greatest influence upon the Imperial decisions.

The bait of personal profit made the Grand Duke the instrument of the Oligarchy. He communicated his mental atmosphere to the Tsar in the matter of the Forestry Concessions at Yonghampo in the Korea. Bezobrazoff had touched a sensory nerve in advocating this affair. We have seen how he accomplished his aim with the aid of spiritualism. The conspiracy against Witte, Lamsdorff and Kuropatkin, the conspiracy against the world's peace, the conspiracy for the omnipotence of the Oligarchy, and for peculation on the largest possible scale, was prepared. The "dissensions" between Witte and Alexander Mikhailovitch (interference with the grand ducal prevarications) precipitated its success.

THE PROVOCATION TO WAR.

The policy of Alexeieff and Bezobrazoff, a policy of provocation of Japan, was represented to the Tsar by his brother-in-law as the logical consequence of Witte's policy. The latter had actually from the outset plotted expansion solely on economic and diplomatic lines. The Russo-Chinese Bank and the Port of Dalny were his principal weapons.

But those on the spot had been obliged by the historical development of affairs to confront the Empire with a totally different situation. The "politics on the spot," whether military or imperial, of Alexeieff—by which he had feathered his own nest—had done their

work. Result, Alexeieff protected Manchuria as if it were Russian, and £1,600,000 from the coffers of the Dynasty were pledged in Korea. The one could not be abandoned; the other must not be lost. It became a question of national honour in the mouth of Alexander Mikhailovitch, who made Witte responsible for the accomplished fact. The latter, however, still held out, and violently opposed the continuance of this policy. The Tsar still hesitated! It was obviously necessary to dispose of the three unwelcome guests at any cost, and to organise systematic machinations. The plan was soon sketched out.

Alexander Mikhailovitch would make the fall of Witte his business, and would become Minister of the Mercantile Marine. Alexeieff and Bezobrazoff would prosecute the quarrel with Japan to the bitter end. Plehve should embroil the affairs of Lamsdorff still further in order to replace him by Izvolski, the Minister at Copenhagen, a partisan of the Empress-Dowager. Kuropatkin should be discredited by preventing him from facing the consequences of premeditated provocations. Sakharoff, the quondam "comrade" of Moscow, should replace him. The entire group of Generals behind Sakharoff should find advantageous posts in the Far East, and assume the direction of affairs (of corruption) out there. Plehve would accordingly become spontaneously omnipotent at St. Petersburg.

The campaign was conducted on quite superior lines. Alexander Mikhailovitch accomplished the defeat of Witte over the question of the price of wood from his Siberian domains. He acquired the direction of the Merchant Marine, an inexhaustible source of profit. Bezobrazoff, the "peaceful conqueror" of the Korea, and still more of the Tsar's millions, was appointed Minister

without a portfolio, and Director of Affairs in the Far East. This *coup* was so astounding that the officials, knowing of five Bezobrazoffs who were generals or senators, prepared five distinct orders of nomination. They did not even take into consideration the name of the shady man of business! The Tsar, who was furious, was obliged to return the whole packet, and give his dumbfounded Chancellery the indications necessary for the proper formulation of the Decree. Alexeieff was simultaneously appointed Viceroy of the Far East a few days before the departure of Witte. The importance of this measure consisted in three points, the gravity of which is obvious:

1. Lamsdorff had no further influence on matters that concerned China and Japan;

2. Kuropatkin was, as regards organisation of war in the Far East, the subordinate of Alexeieff;

3. The funds to be disbursed upon this object were no longer controlled by Kuropatkin, nor by the Minister of Finance, but solely by Alexeieff and Bezobrazoff.

Kuropatkin returned in a state of alarm from his voyage of inspection in the Far East with the full conviction that Japan, knowing the imbroglio created by Alexeieff, intended war. As early as September, 1903, he demanded a considerable capital from the Tsar in order to make preparations for the campaign. He got nothing. Yet at this very time the Alexeieff-Plehve group was draining 320 millions of roubles (about £32,000,000) from the reserves of gold accumulated by Witte! What was the destination of these sums, seeing that at the commencement of the war nothing was ready? The Tsar still told Kuropatkin peremptorily that there would be no war, at the very moment when Alexeieff was pushing it on with all his might, and at the

same time inaugurating the theft of milliards extorted from the Nation in order to keep up the international credit of the Empire.

THE *IMPASSE*.

The outbreak of hostilities proclaimed a day of despair for the Tsar, of triumph for the Oligarchy. Kuropatkin was despatched to the defeat that others had prepared by diversion of the war-funds. The Oligarchy reigned supreme. The sole blot on the picture was the tenacity of Lamsdorff, who had found a powerful advocate in Edward VII. Substantial difficulties were plotted later on for his undoing (capture of English vessels, the Hull affair), but his fall had even then been prepared by the Oligarchy. Caring more for money than glory, they had in their disorganisation of Army and Navy, checkmated the "patriotic diversion." The people, stupefied at first, became furious at the news of the defeats for which they were starved and oppressed. Russia, for the rest, remained isolated. The immorality of the authors of the war was so well known to the whole world that the intrigues on which they embarked with the object of drawing the other great Powers after China, into the struggle, only provoked international hilarity. And their infatuation was further illuminated by the lightning shafts hurled by Witte from his ivory tower at the criminals in their extremity. On Feb. 17, 1904, previous to any defeat, he expounded Russia's downward course to the author.

"You would not take office again in this difficult situation? And yet you are considered the only one. . . ."

"Never! never, so long as these fools are reigning in Russia. My ideal of government is radically different from what is actually being carried out, internally as well as externally."

"This is Plehve's *régime*."

"And you would have me associate myself with a system like that. Look at this war? On the seas we shall never obtain any advantage. On land, perhaps; at least it is possible."

"In France, the Manchurian Question is regarded as a settled thing."

"Settled? How so? Well! for my part, it is not at all."

"Why, yes. We think that under all circumstances you might keep Manchuria."

"In the first place, that is still a moot point. It is probable that we shall have the upper hand on land. In that case we might retain possession of Manchuria as before, if we wished to. But that depends neither upon us nor upon Japan."

"On whom, then?"

"Listen. What, in the last resort, will be the result of this war? In one way or another, we shall be nicely plucked, and it will be absolutely impossible for us to go to war again for some five or ten years."

"With your rivals in the Far East? With America? England?"

"With England, matters can always be arranged. They know what they want. Well! If all these countries, and the others who have votes in the Congress leave us Manchuria, under what conditions will they do it?"

"Probably with the Open Door."

"Just so. But then, do you suppose we want to build

up and support a magnificent establishment, in order that our rivals may inhabit it, and grow rich?"

"It is true that Russian commerce in Manchuria . . ."

"Ah! you see. A system of protection alone could enable us to get something out of this country, and to find the necessary funds for its administration. (Trans-Manchuria represents an annual deficit of 21 million roubles, and the administration of the country costs about 85, which amounts to nearly £11,000,000.)"

"And you will not succeed in getting your Closed Door?"

"Who is likely to back us up?"

"France."

"Certainly, she has no commerce. But the rest?"

"Germany?"

"We know now that she will not; or only at the cost of compensations that would weaken us in Europe far more than we should be profited out there."

"By commercial treaties."

"And other things. In short, we shall be isolated."

"Then what will you do?"

"No one asks. But they will do it all the same. It will be a hard rub. Do you suppose that France will go with us, if we risk everything in order to keep the country?"

"I suppose nothing of the kind."

"Well, that has always been my own opinion."

"Then what is the use of this war?"

"What can you expect? 'They' are fools, arch-fools . . . ignoramuses."

Thus the ten years' reign of the Oligarchy, initiated and organised by the Moscow Group, has culminated by way of the economic drama of the Witte *régime*, in

this tragic situation: the military defeat of Tsardom, and loss of its military prestige: moral defeat in the eyes of the Nation; perpetual famine; growing discontent; destruction of "Russian wealth"; in brief, military, economic and moral impotence, before the outside world, and before the exasperated people. Owing to this fact, the internal situation in Russia has suffered a gradual transformation that makes the fall of the autocratic, or rather oligarchical *régime*, inevitable, whether this be accomplished by a progressive decomposition, or by a sudden catastrophe.

In order to disentangle this truth, and to show the reaction of the people against this *régime*, it is important to analyse the condition of the Empire at the moment of Plehve's death, the initial point of the Revolution, from the fourfold point of view of the principles of bureaucratic government: nationalism, injustice, impoverishment, and ignorance.

How have these four principles reacted upon the people?

CHAPTER IV

THE NATIONAL AWAKENING

IT is evident from the history of the bureaucratic administration as sketched above, that it would never have been able to consolidate its unlimited power, if it had been confronted with other organised forces. The brief period of factitious prosperity under Witte, which had little by little created two new forces, the capitalist *bourgeoisie*, and the artisan proletariat, had been a mortal danger for this system. And the general sullen discontent, product of misery, but none the less the germ of a popular consciousness, was no less threatening. In face of these perils, the primordial principle of the Bureaucracy could only be its constitution in a compact block, before which the subjects of the Tsar should huddle in an amorphous crowd, wherein all differences, social, moral, religious, material, and above all national, would be swallowed up. The last were obviously the most dangerous; since each of the numerous nationalities that had been reduced by war or treason to submit to the yoke of Tsardom, might from one day to the other constitute themselves into an organised force, ready to break the chains of slavery. No one of these nationalities has, in fact, accommodated itself to its fate; centuries of subjection have no more extinguished the hatred of some than a few years of Tsardom have abolished the autonomist aspirations of others; a phenomenon

which passes definite judgment upon the assimilatory capacities of the Tsarian system. Under these conditions, the Bureaucracy has constituted itself, from the outset of its career, the inexorable advocate of the "purification," that is, the Russification of the whole Empire.

With the fall of the aristocratic *régime*, the peril of the nationalities had assumed greater proportions. The Nobles, who had been amenable to seduction by Tsardom in virtue of its favours, places, and amenities, had lost their influence with the people. They no longer sufficed to assure the tranquillity of Tsarism. And since it proved impossible to seduce the peoples, be they Poles, Ruthenians, Lithuanians, Armenians, Georgians, Finns, or Jews, there remained but one expedient, that of crushing them and effecting their Russification by force. Alexander III., most *borné* of all the Tsars, at once perceived the full moral grandeur of this project. Not having the slightest comprehension of the historical development of his vast Empire, he regarded himself in all sincerity as the Tsar of the Mongol-Slavonic tribe of the Greater Russians, and the exclusive Head of the Orthodox Church. His knowledge of history ceased before the reign of Peter the Great, and his policy readily conformed to the same limitations, the more so as his *entourage* found their own billet there. In practice, this theory entailed the persecution and suppression of every nationality except that of Greater Russia, and the persecution of all independent belief within the Orthodox Official Church. The poor blind fool really believed this would consolidate his own power in Russia, simultaneously with his prestige in the outside world.

The procedure was simple, and not unprofitable to the Bureaucracy, who found innumerable opportunities of

blackmailing the more fortunate members of the persecuted communities. The Governors did not take into consideration that their methods of coercion could only result in despoiling the bloom of the nationalities and the religions that were to be suppressed. What could they do? To despoil the communities of the rights and historical privileges that had been guaranteed them by the Tsar himself at the moment of subjection, was the first measure; this was possible by simple perjury on the part of the Tsar. The thing had been done long ago for certain nationalities; the Kingdom of Poland had been transformed into a Russian "District"; Ruthenia, named "Little Russia" by its Muscovite Conqueror, had been annexed, and its political civilisation degraded to the Russian level; Georgia had met with the same fate. Broken treaties, spoken perjuries: these were the amiable measures that Nicholas was pleased to repeat for benefit of the Finns and Armenians. It was too obvious that such a "Russification" could but increase the bitterness of its victims, and consequently militate against the desired object. In order to attack the vigour of the nation yet more radically, but three proceedings were needful: to forbid the national languages, and replace them by Russian; to prevent the accumulation of capital, or the organisation of associations destined for national defence, and, lastly, to compel the adherents of non-Russian religions, by cavilling restrictions and inferiority from the legal point of view, to become converts to Orthodoxy. These methods were everywhere pushed to extremity with unparalleled savagery, and it must be confessed with no result other than . . . the national awakening of the persecuted races. At an epoch in which the whole world was being transformed under the dominion of that "national principle" which was

formulated in France in order to animate the Universe; at an epoch when Italy and Germany were being created, Austria and Turkey undone, by this very principle, the Tsarian folly sought to eradicate it by applying to these victims precisely the same proceedings that in other countries had brought it into being. And thus by a just retribution, political conditions that were to imperil Tsardom in Greater Russia itself were created.

Bureaucratic Nationalism.

The Bureaucracy, for the rest, had some reason to confound the nationalism of the subjugated peoples with the revolutionary temper in general: the two proceed from the same source, and their manifestations are often identical. The difference consists solely in the fact that the national spirit and its product, insurrection, have a tendency to unite all social classes, whereas the revolutionary spirit only animates the classes that are the most oppressed and the most developed from the intellectual point of view. The Russian Bureaucracy, ignoring the existence of different classes besides itself, could only identify under the common name of revolutionary whatever was opposed to it. Hence it could but see in any social or political claim the work of the enemies of Greater Russia, that is of foreigners. And to this day, its repressive action is in accordance with this absurd idea. It would be well if this could be instilled into the Bureaucracy.

On July 18, 1904 (the day after the murder of Bobrikoff, the Governor-General of Finland), Plehve explained it clearly enough in the following extract from a conversation to which he had invited the author.

"You may inscribe this abominable deed upon the

long list of those that you have inspired, abroad, by your Press and your Revolutionary Propaganda."

"Your Excellency must permit me to hold the contrary opinion, and to protest. The foreign Press knows its innocence. We cannot be terrorists, because, with us, terrorism has no object."

"We have evidence that all these conspiracies are organised abroad."

"Yes, but not by foreigners. In the first place, it would be absolutely impossible to provoke any considerable movement abroad by propaganda alone. The roots of the evil lie deeper; they are local. They grow spontaneously. It is not we who are responsible, but the soil that gave them birth."

"Yet you cannot ignore the fact that this soil is a foreign soil. It is the aliens alone who are revolutionaries in Russia: the Swedes of Finland, a few Poles, Armenians, &c., and above all, the Jews."

"It is, indeed, a matter for surprise that they should have remained strangers in their own country. Is the cause not political discontent?"

"The question is national, not political. The proof lies in the animosity that prevails between Russians and Jews, and often degenerates into bloody conflicts. The struggle is national. One must be either for Russia, or against her. . ."

Here, the principle is admirably formulated. Its application has been developed in so masterly a fashion that by its aid the Bureaucracy, crying treason, has enlisted the sympathies even of the nations most imbued with the principle of nationality. At the precise moment when (in 1904) not only the oppressed nations, but Greater Russia herself, rose up against the Tsarian *régime*, the latter dared pretend that it was

still foreign influences that were attacking Russia. It had the audacity to publish the two following despatches in the official organ of the general Staff:

"The Staff has received the following despatch from Paris! 'The emissaries of the Secret Service in London report that the disturbances in the Naval Arsenals of Petersburg, Libau, and Sevastopol, and also in the Mines of Westphalia, were organised by Anglo-Japanese agents, with the object of delaying the departure of the Squadrons from the Baltic and Black Sea. Enormous sums have been expended on the Russian Agitation. . .' Tell the truth to the Russian people. Any sympathy with these disturbances is a crime, and treason. In Paris, the Japanese are publicly boasting that they are the authors of the disturbances."

"The Minister of War has received the following despatch from Paris: 'Our London Correspondent cables that the Japanese Government has distributed 18 million roubles to the revolutionaries, liberals, and Russian workmen for the organisation of the agitation in Russia. It was intended that the Naval stores should be destroyed, so as to render the departure of the Black Sea and Baltic Squadrons impossible, to annihilate Kuropatkin's army by starvation, and to force the Government to concede the peace which is absolutely necessary to Japan on the verge of her bankruptcy.'"

Obviously this confusion between revolution and foreign enmity was not spontaneous. It was merely a manœuvre to ally the less intelligent of the Greater Russians with the Bureaucracy. But it is interesting in the first place from this point of view, and further as a specimen of the police action of this regimen. These despatches really emanated from a contaminated office, the *Agence Latine*, established by the Russian police in

Paris, the prime mover in which is an agent of the Grand Duke Serge, a prime blackmailer, assassin, and avowed swindler, named Cherep-Spiridovitch, who enjoys an amount of mundane consideration in Paris as the President of a "Celtic Slavonic League." Under his direction the Bureaucracy went too far in its application of the "national principle," and Count Lamsdorff, the sole survivor of its adversaries, was able to disavow it officially in the following note :

"The *Agence Latine*, which has lately attained to an unpleasant notoriety, has just furnished another example of its capabilities in the way of senseless calumny. It has had the impudence to spread the statement that M. Witte, the President of the Council of Ministers, is the author of the late disturbances, and that he had in consequence been compelled to take refuge abroad. By a report like this, which exposes its author to ridicule, the *Agence Latine* has condemned itself. It would be beneath the dignity of any serious Agency to contradict any further announcements emanating from the same source."

Yet the mere possibility of similar incidents shows how the Nationalism of Greater Russia has juggled with the question of nationalities, and the degree in which the exasperation of the Bureaucracy against the "foreigners" denounced by Plehve as the authors of the revolutionary movement has gradually swelled. How far have they been so in reality ?

THE FINLANDERS.

The little nation that inhabits the "Lake Country," itself composed of two essentially different peoples, the Finns and their ancient tyrants, the Swedes, has in reality

held entirely apart from the Russian Crisis. The thoroughly occidental character of its civilisation has created an abyss between it and the remainder of the Tsar's subjects, and if it stands as a victim of Tsardom in a capital degree, this is thanks to its more intimate relations with the West. It has above all had the merit of instructing the European Public, by certain salient examples, as to the character of the Russian Administration. In reality, however, its lot is paradisaical as compared with that of its companions in misfortune.

Since the conquest of the country by Alexander I., the Finns had enjoyed a constitutional *régime*, a monetary and customs system, an official language, and a non-Russian military regimen. These privileges were brutally torn away from them by Nicholas II., notwithstanding his oath to respect the Finnish Constitution. The reasons that induced the Tsar to rupture such a solemn engagement differ from those that prevailed in the crushing of the other nationalities. Along with certain purely anecdotal facts, it is less the despotism of Russian Bureaucracy than a vague notion of external policy that has involved the misfortunes of Finland. The country, as a matter of fact, is alien to the whole of the rest of Russia; the Tsardom which there exercises its authority solely in virtue of "personal union" saw Russia separated from the Baltic by a foreign nation. From the point of view of civilisation, this country forms part of the Scandinavian Group; and it is this group that blocks Russia's free outlet to the Atlantic. It has invariably been this obsession of the Free Ocean that has drawn the Tsar into the fatal course of his policy. While in the far Norwegian North the saturnine emissaries of Russia endeavoured by their intrigues to circumvent the simple Norwegian fishermen, Russia was

free to act with all her immense and brutal force against unprotected Finland.

Properly speaking, the "Russification" of Finland has been a simple essay in territorial conquest; and the measures the Finns complain of are those of an invader who seeks to consolidate his power in a conquered land. The Russian Bureaucracy itself has had no other conception of its *rôle*, and truth to say the national opposition of the Finns has followed it in the same sense.

The Governor-General Bobrikoff, Plehve's direct agent, who had retained the post of Secretary of State for Financial Affairs in Finland, along with the Russian Ministry of the Interior, expressed this same opinion only twenty-four hours before his violent death. On that day he was interrogating a Russian student as to the result of a journey which the latter had just accomplished for purposes of study in the country. Bobrikoff began by congratulating him on "having returned alive from this expedition into a foreign and inimical country." "Then you have now seen," he added, "as I forewarned you, that it is not merely the Swedish aristocracy who are hostile to us"! As a matter of fact, Bobrikoff had at the outset of this journey given the student, with whom he was personally acquainted, the following advice: "Be careful! Nine-tenths of Finland are rather English than Russian. Visit the towns and country districts. Address yourself to the few Russians who are established there, and who will give you better information than I can. They will all tell you that they are surrounded by general hatred." Bobrikoff looked upon himself as a proconsul in a newly-conquered country. The "Russifying" measures he undertook show this as well as his words: the application of Russian military law, or rather the

incorporation of conscripts in Russian regiments; the exile of persons noted for their patriotism; lastly, an infinitely suggestive matter, the deportation of the most "dangerous" of the Finnish patriots to the far depths of Russia.

Accordingly, the resistance of the Finns has constantly preserved its character of sullen opposition of a conquered country to its conquerors. Finland has been reduced to passive resistance, that is to the non-execution of Russifying measures. The Finns have been singularly indifferent to the question of Tsardom in Russia. Highly conservative, highly *opiniâtre*, above all highly "virtuous" in the protestant sense, they have constantly taken their stand upon their historical rights, a pure fiction in a political world where the law is to the strong exclusively. And what they have claimed continuously, is not the stamping out of Tsardom, nor even the practical reforms which would politically be of the greatest importance to them, but solely the restitution of the rights guaranteed them by Alexander I.

Needless to say, this contest of discussions as to the rights of the State has remained absolutely sterile. The several acts of isolated exasperation by which it has been interrupted, the murders of Bobrikoff and of Johannsen (the Secretary of the Finnish Senate), are deeds of patriotic vengeance, the first against the arbitrary executive of the conquering alien, the second against the traitor who made common cause with the alien against his country. This situation was so obvious that even the obtuse intellect of the Russian bureaucrats did not fail to recognise it, as is proved by the—thoroughly Russian—adventures that befell the father of Bobrikoff's murderer, General Schaumann.

The son having committed suicide, the unfortunate father was compelled to appear as a hostage for Finland in Russia. He was arrested and transported to Russia, to the Fortress of S. Peter and S. Paul in Petersburg. On what pretext? First, for complicity in the murder, not for conspiracy against the safety of the State. An action was instituted against him by the police, in formal contradiction to the law which the Minister of Justice, Muravieff himself, had instituted a month before, absolutely prohibiting these secret inquisitions. Possibly they hoped the old man would give up the ghost in the horrible subterranean dungeons of Petersburg. Since this slow assassination did not succeed, Muravieff attempted to get his innocent victim condemned on other grounds than his pretended complicity in his son's action.

Schaumann was re-transferred from the cells of the Peter-Paul Fortress to the prison of Abo in Finland. There he was condemned in common form; not, as Muravieff had announced, by the Disciplinary Council of the University of Helsingfors, but by a second-rate tribunal acting upon bye-laws that had no moral force, something like a court-martial. And of what was he accused at the end of it all? Of political conspiracy? Of having incited his son to his deed of terrorism? Not at all! Muravieff himself recoiled from such an inept and monstrous allegation. What then? Eureka! A police-officer searching Schaumann's lodging had come on a sheet of paper upon which the criminal had noted some proposed measures for the reorganisation of—the Terrorists?—no, the Rifle Associations! And note that these associations are expressly authorised by the Government. Moreover, the Tsar himself is patron of them!

The trial was so ridiculous that they dared not prosecute it to the end: Schaumann was liberated, and the debates were "postponed to a future date."

This curious affair gives the exact gauge of the contest between Tsardom and Finland. Russia desires to act administratively and politically there as she does at home. And what she dreads is not revolution, but the absurdity of impotence. Hence her principal weapon is the introduction of administrative measures over the heads of the Finnish authorities, just as that of the Finlanders is to disregard them. A specimen of these amenities was provided in a manifesto by the Grace of Nicholas, promulgated on the occasion of the birth of the Tsarevitch.

For the benefit of the "non-proprietary Finns" (read, the Russian labourers introduced into Finland), the Tsar condescended arbitrarily to levy £120,000 on the Budget of Finland, which was thus employed against the interest of the country, to whose Constitution he had, nevertheless, sworn his word of honour. Those who were liable made respectful protest, and expressed the hope that they would not often have to incur such favours. And that ended the matter!

The "remission of unpaid taxes" was ordained at the same time. This did not cost Russia a halfpenny, but occasioned a profound disturbance of the equilibrium of the Finnish Budget. Since the Grand Duchy receives no subsidies from Russia, it was forced to plug the hole caused by the Grace of the Tsar by . . . levying higher taxes!

The climax, however, was that at the same hour at which these favours were put forth by edict, another Ukase was promulgated which stipulated for the total suppression of the military district of

Finland, which in future was to form part of the district of S. Petersburg.

The mode by which Tsardom has set its system of Russification going in Finland, as well as the methods of resistance adopted by the victims of the system, has caused the national question concerning this people to assume a position of its own. And the Russian Bureaucracy errs in accusing Finland of organising the overthrow of its Administration. This nation, which might have played a glorious part in the historical developments of the day, has done absolutely nothing to secure this. Rabid theory has impelled her rather than the brutality of despotism. She has no place in the *ensemble* of peoples or social classes who have taken action against the most oppressive force in the world. The Russians themselves have been amazed at her absolute inaction at an epoch when she might, if only by utilising her interminable shores for contraband of arms, have played an important part in the assault upon Tsardom. She has only managed to protest, relying upon others. And if one day she obtains the quashed "historical rights" that she demands, it will be by grace of those who in her place would have known how to dictate the will of the modern temper to Russian despotism. The Finlanders are the flies on the wheel of the Russian Revolution.

THE POLES.

The same thing cannot be said of any other nationality that is subject to the Tsar. At most there may exist in one or another a corrupt class which has made its peace with the great Russian Administration in order to enjoy special privileges, or the better to exploit the crowds it

pretends to guide. Such is notably the case with the Poles. The heartrending history of this nation, doubtless the best endowed of all the Slavs, is too well known to make the recapitulation of it desirable.

The life of Russian Poland is entirely summed up in its constantly repeated attempts at insurrection, as provoked by the more and more intolerable obstacles that are brought to bear on Polish civilisation, with the object of degrading it little by little to the level of Muscovite barbarism. The prohibition of the Polish language in the schools is one of the most powerful engines of this system. The vexations endured by Catholicism for the benefit of Orthodoxy are not less "Russificatory"; thus—no Orthodox person of either sex may become Catholic, that is, a Pole (on the occasion of a marriage, for instance) and all the children of a mixed marriage become Orthodox, the gravest penalties being promulgated against any infraction of the numerous stipulations attaching to this matter. The fact that the words, *polski* and *rousski* do not in the least signify *Pole* and *Russian* among the people, but *Catholic* and *Orthodox*, speaks for the importance of these questions. A third means of Russification is to exclude all Poles from the official service, and even from employment in the establishments controlled by the State in Poland, offering them, on the other hand, congenial appointments in the far depths of Russia, in Siberia, and in Central Asia, where they perforce become Russified, while innumerable Greater Russians hold all the official and non-official posts in Poland. For the rest the Polish conscripts are strictly enregimented in Russia, and *vice versâ*, while bureaucratic action, arbitrary executive, is exercised in Poland even more coolly than in Russia.

This is incontestably necessary from the point of view

of Tsardom. The progressive growth of oppression is, moreover, the better explained since Poland is the only part of the Muscovite Empire in which Witte's economic system has borne fruit, fruit which is due to the superiority of the material and intellectual civilisation of the Poles, the greater capacities of the industrial workers and patrons, the larger purchasing power of the population, and, lastly, the vicinity of civilised countries. Towns like Lodz have from a mere nothing become immense and wealthy industrial centres; economic life has been intensified there; an entire district of Poland has assumed the aspect of a modern country, not without an exhibition of economic force that is regarded as alarming by the Russian Bureaucracy (it should be stated that this impetus is due in part to the Jews, who, nevertheless, do not constitute a distinct people in this part of the country, as in Lithuania and the south-west of Russia, but are rather a variant of the Pole, like the Jews of Germany, France, or England). The Russificatory pressure of the Bureaucracy in face of this danger could but be screwed up tighter, to which the Poles retorted naturally by cherishing the idea of national enfranchisement more dearly than ever. They organised powerful national organisations, with the greater ease since a portion of the nation, beyond the German and Austrian frontiers, were already in enjoyment of greater liberty of movement. The crowds of industrial workers—representing an infinitely larger percentage of the population than is the case in Russia—adopted Socialist theories, with the modification that the autonomy of Poland was to be secured along with class requirements, or rather as a prior requisition. The peasants, on their side, could not, as was the case in Russia, afford the support of stupid inertia to the usurping Tsardom; they

do not recognise the Tsar, and suffer his Bureaucracy with a merely relative resignation. The *bourgeois* are even less reconciled to Russia. They have States too near their doors in which their own class is dominant. They are too subject also to annoyance and blackmailing from the Bureaucracy, which treats them for the rest as virtual revolutionaries. And their relatively high intellectual culture inculcates principles, deriving from the history of their country, which, with certain rare exceptions, forbid them to renounce the "natural rights" of their nationality. All, however, are clever enough not to take their stand upon these rights, which are only a *façon de parler*; action alone, struggle, conspiracy, insurrection, revolution, appears to them to be useful. Since the power of Tsardom has been weakened by the economic crisis, on to which the Asiatic crisis has been grafted, this action has been exercised very freely. The recoil from the Tsarian *régime* has assumed a palpable form since the commencement of the Manchurian War.

The direct insurrection against the Russian Administration exploded, thanks to the Authorities themselves, who at that time authorised a collective action, which until then had been absolutely forbidden as "conspiracy," with the object of relieving the misery of the people. At Lodz, more than a hundred thousand workmen were out of employment from June, 1904, nearly all being Socialists, all at any rate anti-Tsarists. The Government in alarm promised commandos and other alms that never arrived. Then of a sudden a vast "Out-of-Work Committee" was organised among the well-to-do Poles. In face of the awful misery, the Government dared not dissolve it. It was, therefore, authorised after the event, and presided over by a police-officer named Kharasonovski, supported by a few

functionaries. These agents, instead of "watching the action of the Committee from the political point of view" preferred—like all the rest of their colleagues—to exercise a little profitable blackmail. The Committee gladly stopped their ears with a few bank-notes, and henceforward distributed the "succour" it had collected without hindrance: it organised a vast, anti-tsarist campaign, and Tsardom well-informed, but already impotent, had to let it be. The refusal to mobilise, the general strikes of 1905, the battles in the streets, were the result.

Poland contributed thus efficaciously to create an inextricable situation for Tsardom. Poland, but not, alas! those who formerly pretended to be its sole representatives. The Polish Nobility, the *shlakhta*, a caste, degenerate for many centuries, which gave the name of "Republic of Poland" to the most barbarous Oligarchy; which, by its stupidity, its subjection to the clergy, its egoism and its insolence, rendered the division of Poland necessary as a measure of international hygiene; and which still survives brilliantly as the valets of the Hohenzollerns, Hapsburgs, and Holsteins; this class was to crown its work by committing the direst treason against the nation, which had raised herself in spite of them, morally and materially, from the slough into which it had thrust her; it wishes to see Poland in servitude, as she is to-day.

This class, it is true, has never lent a hand to anything but the enslavement of the crowd, the exploiting of the artisan masses. It has systematically hindered the development of instruction, the impetus of knowledge, in every department over which it dominates. Throughout the sphere of its influence, the oppression of alien nationalities tyrannises under conditions which far

surpass the measures of Russification contemplated by Tsardom. In Galicia, the Polish squireen rules as autocrat, and holds two million Ruthenians as his serfs. Never were people oppressed in the name of the Russian Government, as are the Jews and Lithuanians in Poland, where there is but a fraction of its authority.

This class is the purest example of material cynical egoism, enwrapt in a so-called aristocratic dignity. They have made admirable arrangements for themselves with each new master. Their principles, their national ideas, their political claims, everything capitulated on the sole condition that they were not made to live as equals with the people, of whom they were the "jewels," and that their ancient and patriarchal privilège of living a merry life while they trampled on the rights of the crowd should be respected. In Russia they have solicited all the fat places. Siberia swarms with them. Permission to appear at Court, to exhibit their uniforms in the ball-rooms of official circles, the delight of seeing themselves included in "high society" in Russia, has transformed the conqueror into a well-beloved ally in their estimation.

The "National League," which still passes, even in Europe, for the principal organisation of Poland, is the instrument of this degenerate caste. If it has raised the platonic spectre of national claims from time to time, this is solely because it is aware that it will otherwise make too poor an appearance before the eyes of the civilised world. Its real aims are apparent from the course of events since 1903. It exercises a material blackmailing, taking payment in places and revenues for its services as police-spies, fighting above all side by side with the autocracy against the people, which desires to be quit of it, even more than of Tsardom.

When the whole Russian Empire rises up and formulates its aims, the nobles of Poland abandon their own people. The "National League" has not even breathed a word of the autonomy which, according to its programme, is its *raison d'être*. It was left for the Polish Socialists, the "internationalists," to invoke it. The sole requirement of the League was the reintroduction of the Polish language into the schools. And why? Because Russian Tsarism is its rival; because the crowd recognises the authority of the Shlakhta less under the constant oppression from Russia; because, by means of instruction in the Polish tongue, the League can better consolidate its own authority, and back up Catholicism, its principal instrument of oppression.

With November, 1904, the Polish nobles declared traitor all who participated in the Liberative Movement. In December they published a whole series of disgraceful articles, declaring that the Movement was financed by foreign contribution. Even the reactionary Press in Russia was scandalised by this accusation. Thereupon a new manifesto was issued to the Polish people. The reservists were forbidden to let themselves be enregimented. Only, only . . . this heroic act of revolution was fulfilled on December 20th, a fortnight after the date at which the reservists had to present themselves. . . .

The activity of these traitors has been sterile. The Polish nation is the advance guard of the anti-tsarist revolution, and will probably remain so. Here, in fact, Plehve was right in his opinion . . . the revolutionary question is a national question, and in order to resolve the one, it would be necessary to suppress the other. But that nation cannot be suppressed, which, more than ever, has the will to live.

GERMANS OF THE BALTIC PROVINCES, ESTHONIANS, LIVONIANS, LETTS, LITHUANIANS, WHITE RUSSIANS

The countries that separate Poland from S. Petersburg are inhabited by several nationalities which all have a crow to pluck with Tsardom. The most apathetic, although the most numerous, are the White Russians, who are settled in the saddest tracts of Russia, entirely covered with swamps and with immense forests. In Europe they are only known by their songs and their language; they are so *arriérés*, so solidly attached to the Great Russians, that they hardly count as nationalities. They could only participate in a general peasant outbreak.

The Esthonians and Livonians, of Finnish extraction, were subjugated by the Teutonic Knights. The Germans dominated their country for centuries, its civilisation being absolutely German—down to S. Petersburg itself, which is situated in the ancient province of Ingermanland. Tsarism at the outset played off one against the other, in order to russify them when they were split up.

The Letts, who with the Lithuanians constitute a special race, belong to the same group. Russification, identical with that of Poland, has only succeeded here in combining the weak together. This was essentially the work of the Governor-General Wahl, famous for having, like a new De Sade, caused the young girls to be flogged who were taking part in a theatrical performance during which revolutionary proclamations were scattered in the theatre. After escaping death from the revolver of the brother of one of his victims, this shady

supporter of Plehve literally, by his oppressive measures, gave an impetus to revolutionary socialism. And his successor Sviatopolsk-Mirski (at a later time the Liberal and unfortunate Minister) curbed it so successfully that the five national socialist parties, Lett, German, White Russian, Livonian and Jew, fused to constitute the kernel of the revolutionary movement in these countries.

The Lithuanians, who were a glorious Empire in the Middle Ages, were subjected by the Teutonic Knights, by Poland, and subsequently by Russia. Like their brothers in misery, they desired free exercise of their language, and liberty of action. They do not even stand out for national rights. But their irreconcilable enemies are Tsardom and the Polish Shlakhta.

Georgians, Armenians, Tribes of the Caucasus.

Nor have the numerous tribes that inhabit the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia ever been reconciled to the Russian conqueror. But whereas the little tribes of the Caucasus are too weak and too uncivilised to serve for aught except a makeweight in the general insurrection, the two principal nations, the Georgians and the Armenians, constitute a very important force in the anti-tsarist movement.

The former, under the epileptic Tsar Paul I., suffered precisely the same fate as the Finlanders under his worthy successor: rupture of a reciprocal treaty, perjury on the part of the Tsar, transformation of a country associated with Russia into a simple province, after disarmament obtained by ruse. Georgia, which extends

from Tiflis to the Black Sea, has known all the mortifications of Finland with a hundred-fold intensity. She has suffered even unto Babylonian methods. The Georgians were deported *en masse*, and no less involuntary immigrants of the conquering race were substituted for them. Like Finland she has never ceased to invoke her historical rights, but she has not attached an impossible importance to them. She has had recourse to the only weapon possible: revolt. And she is prepared for the general insurrection on the day when the other nationalties combine.

The Armenians, whose fate so closely resembles that of Poland, have acted no otherwise. Divided between Turkey, Russia, and Persia, they are considered by the two former to be extremely dangerous to the "established order," on account of their superior civilisation. This centres in two elements: the National Church of Armenia, and a remarkable talent for commerce. Both spiritual force and economic force have been attacked by Russia and Turkey in two orders of measures, all too frequently exercised side by side. The despots of Constantinople and of Petersburg have sought in coalition to destroy their church and to annihilate their very people in a torrent of blood. The martyrology of the Armenians is so well known that there is no need to recall it, in order to understand their exasperated resistance, as well as their revolutionary action. If this is directed even more willingly against the Tsar than against the Sultan, it is because the fall of Tsardom would reduce the Sultan himself to impotence. On the other hand, the Russian tyranny, if somewhat less sanguinary, taps the national life of Armenia nearer to its sources. Since the spiritual centre of the nation is on Russian territory, at the Convent of Etchmiadzin,

it was for the Russian Bureaucracy to take in hand the destruction of the Armenian Idea, after it had failed in its design of exterminating the entire nation by the hand of Turkey. The celebrated declaration of Prince Lobanoff-Rostovski, the Minister of Foreign Affairs before Muravieff: "We want Armenia, but without the Armenians," is characteristic of the whole Tsarian policy in this country. Plehve believed that he was striking a decisive blow when he confiscated the possessions of the Armenian Church in 1903. He deceived himself. This deed was but a vulgar theft by force of arms, since the central treasure of the Church at Etchmiadzin did not belong to the Russian Armenians. The Catholicos Mkrditch, who resided at Etchmiadzin, accordingly set the example of haughty resistance: on September 18, 1903, he received the Russian functionaries who were told off to take possession of the valuables deposited at the Central Convent of the Armenian Church. He pointed out to them that the valuables were not Russian, but represented deposits from the Armenians of Persia, India, Turkey, Holland, Austria, and America. "Your Government," he added, "has only offered the decorations I wear; take them back, I want none of them."

From this moment the Insurrection existed in a latent state, blazing up from time to time in startling outbreaks and local revolts; high functionaries were killed off by the dozen; Galitzin, the Governor-General, who even surpassed the intentions of Plehve, hardly escaped with his life. Tsarism in its turn became exasperated. The organisation of the Church of Armenia was suppressed.

On November 16, 1903, the decree that sanctioned the total suppression of the religious independence of

the Armenians was received by the Catholicos at Etchmiadzin. It ran as follows:

"Supreme Order to the Synod of Etchmiadzin.

"The Emperor has condescended upon my report of October 18, to bring the following measures of the law into operation.

"In future, and until there shall have been a revision of the administrative regimen of the religious affairs of the Christians of the Armenian Confession, the nomination and suspension of the Vicars Episcopal, Diocesan Curates, Members of Consistories, Professors of the Seminaries and Academy of Etchmiadzin, of the Secular Priests, Archdeacons and Deacons, can only take place by special permission.

"Signed: The Minister of the Interior,
"VON PLEHVE."

On precisely the same day, by a coincidence that must be noted to the shame of the "Tsar-Civiliser," the Shah of Persia, a Musulman, published the following Firman:

"I write of an affair which I have much at heart. The Armenian Nation, which has been esteemed by the Throne from all antiquity, and has always given proof of patriotism and loyalty, is proposing to augment the number of its schools in Teheran, Tebriz, and other cities of Persia, and to found several central schools that are of particular importance. Since the intentions of the Armenians are entirely conformable to my wishes, and their initiative constitutes an important impulse in the progress of our subjects, we hereby give, in this firman, full authorisation to open schools of this order.

"We take these schools under our special protection,

and ordain that all our functionaries shall give their support and energetic assistance to this eminently civilising influence.

"Given in the month of Redieb, 1318."

This coincidence certainly contributed to impel the nation along the path of continued revolt. The Governor-General, Galitzin—since no one was anxious to succeed him—had to assist at the complete overthrow of his administrative terrorism. He elaborated a desperate project of "definitive pacification," or rather of Russification by Assyrian methods. His proposal was to deport the majority of the population from the districts of Kars, Erivan, Choucha, and Tiflis, to Siberia, and to the South-West of Russia, and to transport two millions of Russian peasants to the evacuated country. This project was laid before the Tsar by Plehve, and Nicholas sanctioned it, in his crass infatuation. This, however, was on Feb. 9, 1904. The Russian *débâcle* in Manchuria was commencing: the Armenians were forgotten. The Armenians, on the other hand, have not forgotten Tsardom. The threat of mass-deportation convinced them that a war for their national existence might become inevitable. They are armed to the teeth, and their part in the struggle against Tsardom might become decisive if they embarked on a veritable war engrafted on the Revolution, in which Poland might simultaneously co-operate.

The Ruthenians.

The most numerous—and least known—of the Muscovite nations inhabits the southern portion, the richest, most fertile, most industrious district of Russia. The

attempt has been made to assassinate it by silence. In the West, hardly any one knows that the whole south of Russia, formerly known as "Ukrania," is not inhabited by Russians, properly so-called, but by Ruthenians, or, as the Muscovite Tsars have contemptuously termed them, "Little Russians."

This is a nation of twenty-five million souls. And their lot, less known to us than that of the Armenians or Finns, is not less sad than the fate of other "Russified" nationalities. Their martyrdom began exactly two and a half centuries ago, under the Tsar whose name is borne by the heir of Nicholas, the famous Alexis. At that period the democratic State of the Ruthenians, who were known as the *Zaporogi* or *Kazaki* (not to be confounded with the "Cossacks," tribes of Mongolian extraction who furnish a savage cavalry, unfit for modern warfare), was the prey to the incursions of Poles and Turks, and it concluded a treaty with Moscow that closely resembled the pact by which Austria and Hungary are united in our own day. It was an unlucky move. Its autonomy did not long survive this alliance; just the time it took the Tsars to prepare a *coup de force*, as in Georgia and in Finland. The famous Mazeppa, who allied himself with Charles XII. of Sweden against the oppressor Peter the Great, was the last independent chief of the country, and his power set in the Battle of Poltava. Catharine II. purely and simply annexed the immense territory of the Ruthenians, and substituted serfdom for the system of free peasant communities. And this in the name of the higher civilisation of the Muscovites!

But the Ruthenians were to endure much besides. They are among the Slavs what the French are for the Western nations: a lively intelligent people, prone to

salutary initiative, gifted in art and science, in brief the real carriers of civilisation in Oriental Europe. It is to them that the Russian—a Tartar-Slav—owes his emergence from the blackest barbarism. And this doubtless was the unpardonable sin. For a century past, the attempt has been made to russify them. But all in vain. They have a perfectly independent language that owes nothing to the Russian tongue, a highly developed artistic civilisation. Their literature is extremely fine, and if some of their greatest artists, to cite only Gogol, Glinka, and Korolenko, have preferred to express themselves in Russian, it is after the fashion of the Czechs or the Hungarians, who speak German that they may be listened to in the name of their better-known masters.

Alexander II., surnamed the "Liberator Tsar," did indeed abolish the serfdom that Catherine had imposed upon the Ruthenians on paper; but, fearing lest the generous ideas of this great nation should take a dangerous turn, he conceived the notion, in 1876, of promulgating a Ukase that rigorously interdicted the use of the Ruthenian language. By this expedient, which would not have occurred to a Genghiz Khan, a Timûr, or an Attila, the "Liberator" converted the most intelligent nation of the Empire into a people of deaf mutes.

Twenty-five millions of human beings for the past twenty-eight years have been unable to read any book or paper printed in their mother tongue. They can no longer speak or sing in assemblies, nor address themselves to the authorities in the only language that is familiar to them. Any one venturing to import Ruthenian publications (in Galicia for example, where two millions of them are living a wretched existence,

tyrannised over by the Polish nobles who govern in Austria) is liable to deportation, without trial, to the far depths of Siberia. . . .

And for the further exasperation of "well-meaning" Ruthenians, the Ukase of 1876 received fresh confirmation in 1904. The Tsarevitch Alexis was declared "hetman," that, is Prince of the Ruthenians. And on the very day this mark of favour was announced, the Holy Synod refused permission to a group of learned scholars to circulate the Bible in the Ruthenian tongue! The Bible—which in Russia is authorised in thirty-seven languages, from Yakuts to Turkish, from Lapp to Armenian! One language alone is subversive, that of the twenty-five millions of Slavs who constitute the *élite* of the Tsar's Empire!

Albeit these odious measures have entirely alienated the sympathies of the Ruthenian nation from Tsardom, including the best servants of that *régime*, the indolent and illiterate peasants; albeit in Ukrania the popular spirit has been awakened by the reaction from this intellectual oppression more quickly and more completely than elsewhere; albeit an admirable popular literature penetrating the masses for the last thirty years by the recitations of peasant troubadours has made the Ruthenians newly conscious of their part, of their importance, their history, and the oppression that weighs upon them—the majority feel themselves none the less an integral part of the Russian Empire, and they make no claim to the complete autonomy of former times. They want to remain Russians, but to be citizens of a Russia that respects the natural aspirations of all. They want a Russia where all the other citizens and themselves shall enjoy the use of their own language, and carry on their business to the benefit

of their individual interests. They want a decentralised Russia, freed from bureaucracy and from economic serfdom. Hence they form in reality an immense revolutionary group, fed by the numerous cosmopolitan elements which they include along the Black Sea and the Rumanian frontier. And they are this, not for, but in virtue of, their national idiosyncrasies. It is here that the first agrarian revolts took place; it is here that industrialism, capitalism, the proletariat, and conscious socialism have assumed an enormous development. It is here that the first grand political strikes broke out. And it is these people, as has been shown by the Ruthenian Gapon, who, thanks to their mental vivacity, their decision, their intelligence, assume the direction of the popular movement, which the Great Russians themselves, deprived of initiative by a despotism of five centuries, weighed down, stupefied, crushed by religion, administration, and misery, rendered incapable of any kind of revolt, would probably never have inaugurated, had they not been drawn into it by others.

To sum up then—the whole crowd of nations by which Central Russia is surrounded, more than a third of the population of the Empire, is deprived by the Tsar of the "natural rights" which every living nationality claims for itself. All these countries have turned from the Tsarist *régime*, not partly, in virtue of social classes, but as a whole, as entities comprising individuals of all conditions. Accordingly it is they who propound the real political problem: the total transformation of the internal structure of the Empire.

Among these nationalities there is one, however, that has a peculiar place, since its exceptional power has set it at the head of all the victims of Pan-Russianism, till it has finally become the champion proper of the

Russian victims of the Bureaucracy, thus establishing a connection between all these enslaved peoples, and unity of the movement which is drawing the subjects on to the assault of despotism. This is the Nation of the Jews.

THE JEWS.

If Pan-Russianism, the interested Nationalism of the Bureaucracy, has provoked national resistances that were formerly non-existent; if its brutal and unreasonable methods have created ideas of political radicalism, and notably socialism, even in places where the economic and intellectual conditions for the birth of such theories are up to the present conspicuously absent; if in a word it has stirred up a purely political reaction among populations which in reality hardly grasp the importance of political forms to the well-being of nations (*e.g.*, among the White Russians, the Ruthenian peasants, the artisans of Great Russia, who are only peasants out of touch with agriculture), all this is the fault of the Anti-Semite policy, which has done more than all historical considerations to originate and swell the idea of revolution among the oppressed nationalities.

In Russia the Jews are not as they are elsewhere: a race completely assimilated, if only in externals, to the *milieu* in which they live. If in the Russian Empire an unwonted fortune has enabled an infinitesimal Jewish minority, despite all obstacles, to achieve the career the Western Jews have enjoyed for over a century, the immense majority, numbering at the least some five millions of persons, constitute a highly compact nationality, set apart by the religion they fervently practise and by an external ritual, which differentiates them at all times from the Christians by whom they are surrounded; by their habits of daily life; by their general

conceptions; by their language, *Yiddish*, a mixed jargon of German, Hebrew, and Russian, written in Hebrew characters; and, lastly, by their activity, which makes them, where they are not penned up like cattle, the economic masters of the Russians.

The principal, almost unique, aspiration of this people is to find itself in conditions favourable to its assimilation by the nationalities among which it is dispersed. Tsardom has prevented it by brute force from developing in this direction, for the Jews, once gratified by absolute liberty of action, would not merely have profited themselves by the superiority accruing to them from their constant relations with their Western co-religionaries, but, further, their conceptions, being more adequate to the Western intellect, would have rapidly penetrated into the surroundings in which they found themselves, and would make the arbitrary executive of Tsarist Bureaucracy unbearable there also.

The fact that the Jews had not, even before the advent of the Bureaucracy, enjoyed unanimous sympathy from the Slav population of Russia, is to be accounted for entirely by the influence of the Orthodox clergy, who have represented them from all time as the "murderers of Christ," not without augmenting the horror of the illiterate and infinitely credulous populace still further by loading them with the ineptest calumnies (ritual murders, blood-drinking, counterfeiting of the Eucharist, &c.), such as in bygone days possessed the minds of Europeans also. The clergy have pursued this absurd policy, not, as is too often the case in other countries, from economic reasons, but solely from religious fanaticism. They are too poverty-stricken themselves, above all too despised by the people, to enjoy any consideration other than religious; they are considered as a

trade-corporation whose special business it is to put men in relation with God; the pope is paid as an intermediary, a kind of commercial agent; his moral and economic influence, accordingly, is absolutely null, and he would have been incapable of combating the Jews by economic arguments.

In certain districts, indeed, this might have been possible, and, failing the clergy, the Tsar's police have undertaken it. Excluded from time immemorial by historical development from agriculture (*i.e.* the free, collectivist peasant commune, existing formerly for Ruthenians and Russians, at present for the latter only), the professions of artisan, of industrial labour, and of commerce alone were left them; retail commerce, *bien entendu*. Wherever they are not absolutely among themselves, they have succeeded rapidly, thanks to their address and vivacity, in monopolising this commerce. Since on the one hand they regulated prices, and on the other were almost always the only inhabitants possessed of ready money, they have been able to exert a considerable economic pressure, not without inevitably becoming the usurers of an ever-distressful population. Still, the hatred of the exploited victims—wholly unjustifiable, for the rest, since it issued solely from their own economic incapacity—could never have stirred up a true race animosity against them. For everywhere, even when Jews are present, the most revolting type of usurer, the true "blood-letter" of the populace, is the Russian usurer himself, the *Kulak*, "screw," who if he is competing with the Jews, discredits them by making capital out of the Orthodox fanaticism, but in his turn behaves with infinitely more brutality to his victims than the Jew, because he need not fear reprisals from this same fanaticism.

It was the fear of seeing the Greater Russians, the pillars of Muscovite despotism, contaminated by notions that would have undermined their Tsarian political principles, which precipitated the Russian Government into Anti-Semitism, even before the advent of the Bureaucracy. The Jews were isolated in ghettos, or "districts," which really constituted vast zones, entire countries—all outside the ancient Muscovy which they were only permitted to leave for any prolonged period when their activity seemed fraught with advantages for the body of the Tsar's Empire (as merchants on a large scale, renowned scholars, and the like). It is interesting to note that one of the most rigorously prohibited zones has from all time been a band of frontier-territory, about thirty miles in width, which proves that even in that era, the Tsars feared that the "foreign" Jew would be in too continuous relations with the Jew "alien": the pretext for this exclusion was the probability of smuggling, the true reason was the fear of Western influences. In the south-west of Russia (Podolia, Bessarabia) as well as in the west (Poland) and in the north-west (Lithuania, White Russia) the "districts" were already crowded enough with these prolific people; competition was hard, and the misery acute. But since, in these districts at any rate, there was no interdiction of abode, and as even beyond them the artisans and some merchants were readily admitted "for purposes of domicile," their situation, undignified though it might be, was not, taken all round, much worse than that of the Tsar's other subjects.

THE ANTI-SEMITISM OF THE GOVERNMENT.

The Bureaucracy replaced this out-of-date Anti-Semitism by the conception of the open struggle of the races. It was even more afraid of the Jewish temperament than the ancient aristocratic Tsardom had been, and it needed above all a scapegoat on which to discharge the burden of its own misdeeds, notably, the economic exploitation of the populace. Hence it sought to crush the economic and intellectual force of the Jews, and at the same time make them suspect to the Slavonic people as their political and social enemies. All this became possible at the epoch of Nihilism, when the hatred of the Jew, artificially nourished by the Government, was to make the people forget their hatred of the Bureaucracy. We have seen, in our account of Plehve, how the first Jewish massacres were organised. In travestying the facts with an appalling astuteness which never failed him until the bomb of 1904, Plehve convinced society in Russia that the Jews themselves had been the authors of this sanguinary Anti-Semitism. Again, from 1882, under pretext of "State Security," he had promulgated anti-Jewish edicts which, according to his idea, would, as he confessed himself, destroy the whole nation by three methods—hunger, emigration, assassination. These edicts, which had so far remained "provisory," restricted the quarters, huddled nearly all the Jews from other regions into them, and, more, forbade their residence in country places. It was an organised persecution. Tens of thousands of Jews, expelled from all parts, lost their means of subsistence, and came to swell the ranks of the unemployed in the quarters, where there was already a plethora in every trade. Restricted by the nature of their forced resi-

dence to a certain number of occupations, their pauperism became alarming. The quarters were infernos. Death by inanition was a trifling accident; epidemics flourished, by reason of dirt and under-feeding. Two-thirds—the figure is official—of the Jews fell into such destitution that—the words are official—their "food did not suffice to fit them for the trades they followed." And yet they worked on, or died. The most fortunate emigrated: but the immense majority continued their martyrdom to the end. Appalling incidents contributed to the eternal disgrace of the Tsarian tyrants! Sviatopolk-Mirski himself, the reputed "Liberal," committed the abominable action of forbidding, in accordance with the law, the entire Jewish population of four thousand souls, whose quarter had been destroyed by fire, to take refuge in the country places round (not far from Vilna); it was in the winter of 1903, when the cold was Siberian; the unhappy wretches remained without shelter, almost without clothes or food, for three days and nights; and six hundred of them perished in the two succeeding months.

But Plehve's idea was fallacious.

While his laws of 1882 were intended to stifle the Jews, contemporaneous economic and financial policy gave them unexpected force.

This policy, in fact, could not have been initiated without the Jewish capitalists, who received an impetus the more dangerous to the Administration, inasmuch as the solidarity of the Jews was manifested at the same time by the support which capital lent to the co-religionist proletariat. Nor was it merely a question of large capital, which was even more rare among the Jews than among the Russians. The latter had not the initiative that was so essential in this period of febrile

economic activity. The Jews abounded in it, the more since their safety possibly depended on it. All the Jewish capital was employed at once. The "lower-class Jews" themselves, who, as has been stated, were the sole possessors of ready money in the villages, made great profit out of it. The Jewish proletariat found new means of gaining a livelihood by the new industries; and the Jewish patrons preferred that their hands should be co-religionists. The number of Jews, who had become so influential, from the economic point of view, that they could no longer be treated as pariahs, was perpetually on the increase. The cleverer of them returned as masters, where their fathers had been hunted out as vermin. The Jewish artisan proletariat, active, solvent, grew wiser day by day, and organised itself. If the poverty was still appalling, the hope at least of changed conditions, and therewith energy to work, revived. Yet all this was the least of the disasters the Bureaucracy had brought upon itself by its Anti-Semitism.

As to the Russians, for whose benefit the crimes against the Jews purported to be committed, they profited in no way by the anti-Jewish injunctions. On the contrary, absence of Jews was generally translatable into commercial decay, increased price of commodities—in brief, absence of economic vitality.

Within the Jewish Zone, moreover, Russian officialism soon found its brutality combated by the more astute weapon of corruption. The quarters became a breeding-house of functionaries who were unable to conceive of public offices without peculation and prevarication, and who disseminated the administrative practices of the Jewish zone throughout the entire Empire.

Nothing could be more natural. On the one hand the

Jews were absolutely deprived of rights, at the mercy of the officials, and as they came more and more to be regarded as the adversaries of Tsardom, all the annoyances inflicted on them were covered by the most influential personages (Plehve, Serge, Pobiedonostseff, &c.); blackmailing, illegal taxes, even looting were all condoned. On the other hand, the Jews in easy circumstances were perforce willing to pay ready money for the contingent tranquillity that the officials were more than ready to sell them, in order to avoid the innumerable vexations that would otherwise embroil their affairs, or even destroy the harmony of their private relations. The co-operation of these two elements accounts for all the horrors of contemporary Russian Anti-Semitism, as well as for the revolting cynicism of the average functionary. It is hardly necessary to recall the details of the massacres of Kishineff and Homel, in which a project of political distraction from the Revolution (as in 1882) was united to a lust for extortion of subsidies and pillage. The trials contingent on these butcheries proved that the Authorities collaborated in their organisation, as by the payment, *inter alia*, of the cost of printing the proclamations that incited the mob to pillage. An episode from the first of these trials will reveal the nature of this official Anti-Semitism better than any analysis.

The Jewish merchant Mendel Rudi, a commercial notability at Kishineff, was completely ruined by the massacres. On the fatal day he had in his shop two safes containing some £3,000.

He betook himself to the Governor, De Raaben, to claim protection. After the latter had kept him in suspense for an hour, he promised to give him a guard for his house, and to give orders to that effect imme-

diately. When Rudi got back to his house, it was in the hands of pillagers who were breaking everything, and worked all day to force his safes, although the Head Office of the Police was immediately opposite. The Deputy Chief of the Police accompanied by a gang of agents held the street during this time, and would not permit any interference with the marauders. The officer repeatedly refused to intervene, on the pretext that "his instructions did not provide for the case." By the evening the safes were forced, and the money was distributed, the Deputy Chief of Police at the head of the recipients. The Governor himself received a "honorary gift" next day from the police-officers!

At the trial, the Public Prosecutor and the Court were unable to dispute the accuracy of these facts. The barristers, Karabatchevski and Kalmanovitch, on behalf of the civil (Jewish) party, stated cases tending to inculpate the functionaries who were convicted of complicity. The Prosecutor and Court declined, and adjourned the hearing for four hours, which they occupied by an exchange of despatches with the Ministers of the Interior (Plehve) and of Justice (Muravieff). After the adjournment, the conclusions were rejected for reasons that were summed up in the words "by order." The principal lawyers then threw up the cases, declaring that the complicity of the Government and the Magistrates made fresh massacres absolutely inevitable.

It may be useful to add that the horrid farce of this trial of the murderers of Jews (eight of whom did not inhabit Kishineff and had been purposely "imported" some days before) was played out to the bitter end. Only twenty-eight of them were found guilty. Two, convicted of murder in more than ten cases, were

condemned to eight years in prison, the rest to one or two years. No damages were allowed the despoiled Jews. The list runs: 1,350 houses destroyed, burned, ravaged; £16,000 looted from the safes under police superintendence; 320 wounded, 52 dead, 2,000 families reduced to appalling misery; and, lastly, the impunity—with commendation—of the real culprits, officers and soldiers, journalists, agitators, peculators, police, governors, prefects, ministers, all convicted by irrefutable proofs of being the instigators and organisers of, and persons benefited by, the crime.

Yes, the Russian Jews are, as Plehve said, the enemies of this *régime*, and corrupt the Tsar's officials. And with reason.

Anti-Semitism waxed rabid in virtue of the people's discontent. It celebrated its supreme orgies when the war with Japan broke out. In the first place there was the terrible scourge of the blackmail levied upon all the Jews who were tolerated outside the quarters by the subordinate functionaries and police, who presented themselves to levy heavy "voluntary contributions" for the Red Cross, the naval subsidies, or other institutions. These agents were in the habit of recommending their victims to "fork out a little more," on pain of being evicted from their positions. Needless to say, the contributions obtained in this way never arrived at the coffers for which they were destined.

In the next place the Minister of the Interior had arrogated to himself, by a highly characteristic exercise of power, the privilege of a partial revision of the lists of the reservists who were liable for service. Needless to say, the percentage of Jews sent to the war by this means was simply monstrous (ten times too many). Nearly the whole body of Jewish doctors was eliminated

from S. Petersburg in this fashion. Of 180 doctors who went to the front between March 1st and 10th, 1904, 110 were Jews. It must be stated, on the evidence of another Minister, that this extraordinary measure was taken contrary to the wishes of the Minister for War, by the Secretariat of the Interior: for a two-fold reason. On the one hand, all the educated Jews were believed to be Liberals, whose presence in Russia did not seem desirable in a crisis. On the other hand, reprehensible and interested representations were made by the Christian practitioners, who desired to free themselves—even at the cost of sacrifices—from dangerous competition; two functionaries in high places received gratuities, amounting to over £2,000, from these patriotic doctors.

The Jewish doctors expedited to the Far East were, moreover, stripped of a portion of their emoluments. They were only allowed 900 roubles for the expenses of the journey, while the Christians received 1,225. In the Ministry's lists, all figured indiscriminately as receiving the same sum. The difference disappeared in the pockets of the functionaries, who were certain to be shielded by their comrades and Anti-Semite superiors.

The families of the Jewish reservists and doctors on active service were a prey to annoyances from the Authorities, who expelled them from the large towns to the ghettos reserved for Jews—an eminently chivalrous act in the absence of the father of the family, but "rendered necessary" by the edicts, which stipulated that "where the father of the family is incapable of providing for its needs, the family must in every case be expelled to the districts."

To escape this fate in the name of the patriotism of their husbands, the wives were fain to purchase the

"goodwill" of the officials at exorbitant "war" prices; evidence of this has been given in Courts of Justice, even when these odious stipulations had been annulled by a special Rescript of the Tsar.

Lastly, wherever the Russian Reservists were mobilised, the Jews were the victims of massacre and pillage.

How was it that these victims were invariably Jews? The answer is simple. The Bureaucracy finds a material and political profit in this sanguinary Anti-Semitism. Since disorder was inevitable under the conditions created by the Authorities, it was scheduled against the Jews. Here are one or two facts in evidence. At Dvinsk, the Chief of the Police attached notices to the street-lamps, recommending the Jews to abstain during the period of mobilisation from all money-broking, on pain of popular reprisals. In the Department of Vitebsk, a Governmental circular ordered all the chiefs of districts to take similar measures, threatening the Jews with massacres. At Mohileff, the Head of the Police, an individual of the name of Radionoff, pronounced the following allocution, on October 15th, 1904, before some fifteen Jewish workmen who had come to protest against the closing of a factory: "We shall have mobilisation, then you will pay for your revolutionary misdeeds; your blood will flow throughout the city." Which actually happened a week later. It may be added that at the outset of the war, when the Government Press had accused the Jews of acting in concert with the Japanese, this same functionary had menaced them with massacres "like those at Kishineff," but had calmed down in view of 500 roubles which the Jewish merchants tendered him.

The disturbances, for all this class of people, have

been too good a source of revenue not to be encouraged. But their methods, sanguinary or not, would never have been possible if the Anti-Semitism of the Government had not delivered the Jews tied and bound into their hands. Thus there is one excuse for them: the same the Jews would put forward if they were ashamed of being revolutionaries. It is the Administration that is the sole source of the evil.

THE JEWISH REVOLUTION.

The cardinal result of the Anti-Jewish legislation has thus been to degrade Russian Officialism a few steps lower in its abjectness. And, by recoil, this deterioration, translated by the most ignominious oppression of the Jews, had, if possible, an even more disastrous effect upon Tsardom. Jew capitalism, with the train of middle-class Intellectuals who depend upon it, might here as elsewhere have become a precious auxiliary of the Autocracy against the aspirations of the lower classes. Finding itself, however, exploited, and looted by the irresponsible tyranny of the Bureaucracy, the Jewish *bourgeoisie* saw a no less odious adversary above than below; and thus it has deliberately made itself the core of agglomeration of all the discontented elements. Here, beyond the law, the intelligence, energy, and solidarity of the Jews has found its way plain. And in the last resort came about the extraordinary spectacle of the Russians, for whose benefit Anti-Semitism had been organised, rallying round the Jews to combine with them against the Autocracy.

In reality, there is not a single grand political organisation in the Empire that is not directed, or at any rate markedly influenced, by the Jews. Even the "Liberals,"

constitutional monarchists who are recruited from the highest classes of society, and among the officials themselves, wherever opportunism has not stifled their independence of opinion, would be lost without the Jews. And if the Liberal Nobles who, in 1904, took the lead in the constitutional manifestations in the Departmental Assemblies, have not avowed their connection with the Jews, this is because they have been able to adopt defensive tactics against the Bureaucracy, since they still have ancient rights to defend against the new *régime*, but they have practically followed the Jewish initiative in their political campaign. In all the other parties, the Jews are the avowed leaders. The Marxian Social-Democrats, the Terrorist Social-Revolutionists, the Socialists of Poland, above all—and perhaps best organised of all these secret associations—the Jewish artisan party, the *Bund*, are directed by Jews, and are necessarily influenced by the Jewish radicalism of the alien.

Hence, to sum up, Plehve and his successors must be held justified in assuming that the Political Question and the Jewish Question are fundamentally one. If this was the case, it must be added that no solution of the crisis other than civil war would be possible. For the Polish, Ruthenian, Armenian, and other questions, all of which have given way to the Jewish Question, would crop up again one after the other the instant it had been solved. The Russian Empire would cease to exist in its present form, and would be replaced by a Federation resembling that of Germany or even Austria-Hungary. This obviously serious consideration has thrown Tsardom, and even its most reasonable officers, into a state of absolute reaction in everything that concerns the question of purely political transformations. It is impossible to touch on these without evoking the spectre of the

decadence of Great Russian Power. On the other hand, the problem that is agitating Tsardom itself is quite distinct. Its supporters insinuate that the undeniable revolutionary movement is not political in character—at most a million of Great Russians would understand it as such—but is due to two other causes. These last, absence of justice, and misery—nourished by the Bureaucracy—have provoked a moral crisis and a social crisis, beneath the political situation.

THE MORAL CRISIS.

This Tsarian Theory, which will discover for us the real springs of the Revolution, is based upon the distinctly striking fact that the profound national and social differences existing in the Empire have been completely wiped out in order to give place to one single and powerful common aspiration: the overthrow of the Bureaucratic *régime*. The explanation of this remarkable phenomenon lies wholly in a psychological fact: this is the reaction against the insolence of the Bureaucracy as exercised towards all the Tsar's subjects, without exception. All, rich and poor, aristocrats and peasants, burghers, scholars, and artisans, are equally deprived of any means of resisting the arbitrary executive of no matter what functionary, who may intervene in the most trivial affairs of daily life, as much as in the gravest judicial or political matters. And this situation of the people in face of a reigning caste who are minus any scruples is the more insupportable, inasmuch as the official acts, which we have just termed "arbitrary" in accordance with the Western point of view, are not so at all according to Russian law. In the immense majority of cases, on the contrary, these "arbitrary" acts without appeal

are perfectly conformable to the spirit, or, failing that, at least to the letter of the edicts invented by the Bureaucracy, accepted as useful by ignorant Tsars, and ratified under the denomination, doubtless ironical, of "laws" by the very individuals who have proposed them in view of their proper interests.

It is this judicial oppression, this legalisation of illegality, this *régime* of denial of justice, which constitutes the strongest tie that unites the divergent elements of the Revolution. This has been recognised by the Chiefs of the Bureaucracy itself, by outsiders like Witte or Mirski, as well as by the terrified Oligarchy, by Muravieff, Pobiedonostseff, and the Grand Dukes. But if the most determined tyrants dream of destroying the "moral bands" of the Revolution by giving the people opportunity of strict appeal to the "law," and therewith suppressing the "arbitrary executive," they could not, under pain of political—and pecuniary—suicide admit that the "law," as it exists in Russia, is itself the supreme arbitrament, because it confers discretionary powers on irresponsible functionaries, which permit, and often indeed enforce, what we should term infringements of justice. Under these circumstances, the suppression of arbitrary executive and legislative reform is possible only by the complete destruction of all existing Russian legislation. For—and here we have the cardinal point—the pivot of the whole revolutionary crisis, the independent existence of the "legal arbitrament," in all domains of State Conduct, relegates the entire administration and jurisdiction solely to the personal dispositions of the functionary.

There is a "law" for example, which gives the Chief Censor discretionary power to determine if manuscripts are eligible for publication or not. There is not one

word to fix the limits of eligibility. The significance of such a law can be judged if in imagination we substitute for the former school-inspector Zviereff, a disciple of the Grand Duke Serge and of Pobiedonostseff, who was in charge of this department during the Oligarchy, men like Tolstoï or Gorki. The three names constitute three different laws. (A man like Zviereff was able to go so far as to forbid the foreign Press to say what it liked; and he dared establish a "Special Bureau for the Correspondents of the Foreign Press," where these last can find "the only veracious intelligence that will be accepted without censure by the telegraph agencies": by which, naturally, only the French journalists have profited.)

Another "law" gives the Chief of the Political Police, an institution contrary in itself to the notion of law, the right of watching the correspondence of suspected persons. Who is suspect? Some regard a Minister as non-suspect. Others hold that every one is suspect who is sufficiently wealthy to be the convenient victim of a rich blackmail. Plehve—as we have seen—suspects his own superiors, the Tsar himself, the whole world, as appears from the following official injunction of February, 1904: "Letters under a closed envelope coming from abroad must not contain any printed Russian matter. Enclosures not conforming to this rule will be confiscated." How was Plehve to ascertain the presence of printed matter in Russian, within closed envelopes? He was committing wholesale violation of private correspondence. This misdemeanour is, therefore, legal in Russia.

Facts like these serve to show that all the promises and reforms by which the Bureaucracy have sought to influence the moral crisis are vain. "The right of every subject to obtain justice according to the law" is

a *contradictio in adjecto.* Nevertheless, the question has been cleverly enough proposed. The "moral question" is only the awakening of human dignity throughout the nation; it is the question of popular confidence in the law; cannot this problem be solved without recourse to fundamental changes in the political organisation of the Empire? The national enslavement under the rod of the Bureaucracy is in no way a political question. It is solely "an unfortunate coincidence of 130 million personal questions"! If each subject of the Tsar could individually obtain satisfaction in the matter of just treatment by each individual functionary, the entire question would disappear. If every bureaucrat conformed to the existing law, not like Plehve, who utilised it for his personal interests, but honestly, in the interest of the country and its peoples, the Bureaucracy would meet with no hatred, no resistance; no revolutionary movement would be possible; no one except the "aliens," who have adopted the fatal attitude of mind of civilised peoples, would demand the right of interference in Governmental activity! For see! is Revolution, or a Constitution, demanded for aught beside a guarantee against official arbitrament? Thus the moral problem becomes a mere question of administrative tact, and this, it is obvious, might be settled by the Bureaucracy itself, which would thereby not only retain its absolute and fruitful power, but would further secure the love and sympathy of the nation!

This singular bureaucratic argument may be less specious than it appears to the Western mind; it is, in fact, based upon the real temper of large masses of peasants and other uncivilised people who are still incapable of discerning the importance of political forms, but who rebel sullenly in one case and another against

the arbitrary proceedings of the Authorities. And it might even be thought that up to the moment when these ignorant and apathetic masses discover that a slave well treated is none the less a slave, "administrative tact" might really retard the Revolution, if only tact and bureaucracy were not at opposite poles. And even if the "moral reform" were accomplished, if each functionary did render himself individually and judicially responsible for the official acts which he commits against the law—a reform which, as we have seen, has completely aborted by the fault of the Grand Duke Vladimir, who was desirous of securing impunity without restriction for the Grand Dukes—nothing else would change so long as the Bureaucracy itself could persist in transforming, introducing, and abolishing "laws" free of all national control. The Bureaucracy will continue simply to transform the law in such fashion as to render any despotic action conformable with it that may appear favourable to the material or moral interests of the reigning caste.

THE LEGAL ARBITRAMENT.

Special volumes would be needed to set out the repertory of this Legislation for the Use of the Bureaucracy. There is scarcely a single law, hardly a Tsarian measure of the pre-bureaucratic epoch, which has not been transformed with the view of "legalising the arbitrament" of these functionaries. In this state of things, this legal anarchy, the nation sees the political foundation that the Oligarchy seeks to deny. How in fact is this development of arbitrary bureaucratic executive to be checked save by national control of the legislation? And how is this control to be exercised

without a Constitution, without legislative powers devolving upon a National Elective Representation?

Muravieff and Plehve have been the principal authors of the arbitrary transformation of the law, and have surpassed themselves in exact proportion with the increasing force of popular demands.

We have seen that Plehve nominated Muravieff Minister of Justice, because the previous Minister had refused to abolish the sole independent jurisdiction that was in existence. Muravieff suppressed the Justices of the Peace, and charged the police by a "law" to occupy themselves with the affairs that formerly devolved on this jurisdiction. Hence for all minor matters justice was replaced by simple orders from the police, without either discussion or possibility of defence. This was the first great *coup* carried by Bureaucracy against Justice. Muravieff inundated the Magistracy with "circulars" equivalent to edicts, in which phrases like the following may be culled: "Magistrates are officials like the rest; hence their first duty is that of discipline and obedience to the orders of their superiors." "I therefore recommend the Public Prosecutors and Presidents to solicit the advice of the Ministry before concluding upon and judging these (political) cases, for the avoidance of unfortunate consequences." "The Magistrates, officials of the Autocratic Emperor, must in these delicate functions (preliminary reports upon suspected persons) have regard conclusively to the interest of the State, and exaggerate their solicitude in this direction sooner than act against these interests from false considerations of indulgence." In other words, the principle of this *régime* was that of Conviction by Order.

Striking examples of this were seen in the grand trials at Kishineff and Homel of the men who massacred the

Jews; in one (at Homel), they exculpated the whole crew, at the same time pronouncing a moral conviction of the victims. The trial (1903) of the strikers of Taganrog proved that the Minister of Justice could arrogantly insist on false witness from his officials, as well as suborn the non-official witnesses, and even dictate the terms of the sentence. Fifteen secret agents bore witness in this case against some twenty accused persons, reproaching them for revolutionary propositions containing foreign words of which they did not even know the meaning, as was stated in the defence. In order not to make any mistake in attributing these propositions on the hearing to any accused persons other than those before them, the Court put numbers agreeing with those of the files beside the place of each accused, in order to facilitate the task of the officials. When these numbers were removed at the instigation of the defence, the witnesses failed in every single case to recognise those whom they were charging. The same occurred with the non-official witnesses, six of whom had been absent from the town at the time of the strikes, and who in some trouble of mind confessed that they had been received by the prosecutor, who had dictated their depositions, not without a promise of gratuities in money. The situation was so painful that the Court was unable to come to any decision, and the debates dragged on for five hours over a question of form, in order subsequently to pronounce the most fantastic sentences. An indiscretion only to be expected brought to light an interchange of cypher despatches with the Ministry, the last of which dictated the penalties to be inflicted!

This is a single, typical and well-established case, out of thousands similar to it.

Transformation of the Laws.

In all these cases there has at any rate been some trial, some judicial intervention, some application, however false, of the existing "law," *i.e.* a simulacrum of justice. What is even more serious than these denials of justice, is the replacing of these laws by new laws, which destroy the indispensable guarantees for the preservation of, be it only theoretical, confidence on the part of the accused persons. Under Muravieff, no fewer than 706 "laws" have been promulgated, with a view of limiting the jurisdiction of the Assizes which the Senate and Council of the Empire have not ventured to abolish at one fell swoop. This has resulted, among a crowd of other abominations, in the fact that in all trials from which the Bureaucrats might derive some unpleasantness, the Assizes sit without a jury, so that officials are only judged by their own comrades and accomplices. But there is worse to come.

The publicity of the proceedings at the Assizes was annoying, especially in political cases. Alexander III., who became more and more terrified by the machinations of the Oligarchy, authorised the occult directors to find some safer method. A regulation, elaborated by Plehve and Muravieff, officially sanctioned conviction without trial, for political offences. This was not even a "law" in the Russian sense, merely a "provisory decree." The tacit permission of the Tsar was sufficient. The Senate and Council of the Empire were shelved. The illegality, in spite of their mild protests, became a new right! Plehve, Muravieff, Pobiedonostseff, and the Chief of Secret Police, these four, arrogated to themselves the monstrous privilege of pronouncing, on a

mere police report, penalties amounting to as much as five years of deportation, with subsequent relegation to the uttermost ends of Siberia—one of the severest punishments in the Penal Code. In reality, the Penal Code was abolished henceforward in favour of the four conspirators. Thanks to this law, thousands of the best citizens of Russia, the most courageous and the most intelligent, but for that very reason the most suspect, have been buried alive in Siberia, or thrown into prison, often on the sole denunciation of a discontented house-porter (the porters are nominated by the police). And what "reform" has been invented by the Bureaucracy to remedy this state of things? It has organised a law, a legal law, which has officially organised and aggravated these very monstrosities. There exists no better condemnation of the Bureaucracy than the Confidential Report on this question addressed by Muravieff, after Supreme Authorisation, to the Council of the Empire, on February 10, 1904, as follows:

"The defects of the legislation in respect of procedure in the preliminary examination of political cases have long been known, and yet they have so far remained unrepealed.

"These defects, however, are now more obvious than ever on account of the considerable recrudescence of the socialist-revolutionary propaganda during the last few years.

"The number of political crimes which crop up annually has in consequence been augmented in an extraordinary degree. It is impossible to pass on without calling attention to this particular circumstance, *i.e.* that the authorisation (introduced by the law of May 19, 1871, as a provisory measure) to decide certain political affairs, in certain cases, by administrative order

instead of deferring them to the Tribunals (as is exacted by the legal enactments of the year 1864), has been transformed in practice into a general law, save in a few very rare exceptions.

"A striking picture of the situation is given by the statistics deposited in the archives of the Ministry of Justice, which refer to the political crimes of the years 1894 to 1903."

Then follow the statistics. The Minister shows that between 1894 and 1903 the number of "political criminals" has risen from 1,500 to 12,000, more than 6,000 of whom had been sued "by personal order of the Tsar" without recourse to any organs of justice! The "deportations without judgment" alone have during the last year amounted to more than 1,500, as against 55 in 1894. And it must not be forgotten that the whole of these statistics deal only with the "crimes" with which the Ministry of Justice has had to occupy itself. They are silent as to the tens of thousands of convictions on "sealed orders" from the police, issued by the Ministry of the Interior. The latter has swooped down without control upon all suspected persons of whom absolutely nothing can be alleged judicially. According to the figures divulged in Plehve's lists, the number of these unfortunates amounted in the single year of 1903 to 64,000 persons! Muravieff admits that all this is a deviation from the fundamental principles of Russian justice, and continues his demonstration as follows:

"It results from these data, firstly, that the number of political cases has increased in the last ten years in an enormous proportion, and secondly, that all these cases, with extremely few exceptions, have been settled by administrative order. It is notable that, during the period extending from 1894 to 1901, no political case was

referred to the Tribunals according to the regulations of our Code of Criminal Procedure. It was not until 1902 that three cases, and in 1903 twelve cases, were referred to the Mixed Tribunals, with representatives of the different orders. With regard to cases referred in virtue of exceptional laws to the Military Tribunals, their number is insignificant, and does not exceed three to five per annum. It is also necessary to remark that the number of suits instituted by His Imperial Majesty, which in 1894 was only fifty-six, has increased in 1903 to 1,533, that is twenty-seven times.

"This state of things, in which the administrative solution is becoming the normal mode of settling political cases, while the judicial solution is now the exception, can only be regarded as a deviation from the fundamental idea that guided the legislative power, not merely at the moment when the juristic statutes of 1864 were compiled, but even at the promulgation of the law of May 19, 1871.

"This state of things, however, has acquired a considerable extension in consequence of defects of procedure in matters concerning State crimes, and defects of our criminal legislation in general.

"For this reason, we propose the following legal recommendations:

"1. Affairs for which the preliminary examination has terminated shall be transferred to the Cabinet of the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal (*Sudebnaïa Palata*). The Public Prosecutor shall present his conclusions to the Minister of Justice, save in the cases in which the law permits him to enter a non-suit. The Minister of Justice will either give a judicial sequence to the case, or will grant the indictment after reference to the Minister of the Interior, if the preliminary inquiry seem to him to give insufficient data for bringing the

accused before the Tribunals, or else he will put the affair into the hands of the Minister of the Interior in cases in which juristic proof of the political crime is wanting, but where there is evidence of subversive political ideas: in this last case, the Minister of the Interior will apply the articles 34-36 of the Regulations of Public Safety;

2. In cases where, for exceptional reasons, the Minister of Justice shall deem it useful to remove a political case from the ordinary course of Justice, he may, after conferring with his colleague, the Minister of the Interior, solicit from His Majesty an order to terminate it by administrative measures;

3. In the case in which affairs are referred to the Tribunals, the Prosecutor will be obliged to follow the procedure of the Assize Courts sitting without Jury."

This document is of double importance: on the one hand, it proves the enormous extension of the Revolutionary Movement since 1894 (Witte's *régime*) in Russia; on the other, it admirably describes the character of the "*régime* of legality," which, even where it professes to put an end to illegal procedure, has contented itself with simply sanctioning and legalising the existing illegality.

This accordingly is the way in which "justice" is to be secured by bureaucratic reform. It must be added that in the legal recommendations drawn up according to this report, Muravieff has further specified that *if*, by chance, the Tribunals should after all be forced to deal with political crimes, they may "drop down three rungs upon the ladder of degrees of crime," in relation to the crime indicated as the cause of indictment by the Minister; in other words, they are in any case forbidden to pronounce an acquittal where the Minister has indicated any sort of misdemeanour.

JUDICIAL PREVARICATION.

This promising specimen of judicial reform has considerable symptomatic value. It shows that the Bureaucracy is able to introduce laws for the personal benefit of its functionaries. Its authors, Plehve and Muravieff, had they remained in power, might easily have freed themselves with this weapon from no matter what adversary, political or otherwise, making use of it at the same time as an invaluable instrument for blackmail. Analogous methods have been employed in every domain of the administration to legalise the arbitrary executive which more particularly facilitates blackmail and corruption. The Russian people has learned this from various sensational cases. The two most curious, involving the Ministers themselves, will show conclusively that the "moral crisis" is identical with the "political crisis."

The first is known by the name of the Barantsevitch Case. It is quite straightforward. Barantsevitch, a magistrate, had confiscated 15,000 roubles illegally in an administrative action of which he conducted the preliminaries. The person from whom he had confiscated them, proved innocent of any peculation, reclaimed his money. This money had disappeared. The Justice was inculpated and condemned for corruption. But he was able to prove by means of letters of exchange that it was the Minister Muravieff who had received the money. The Tribunal declared it to be a personal affair that was not its concern, and made the State repay the 15,000 roubles to the heir. The Justice was pardoned, and rewarded by a scandalous preferment; he was appointed Public Prosecutor at Irkutsk!

The second definitive case, which finally upset the

Ministry itself, not without discrediting the Court of Appeal besides, is a veritable repertory of all the arguments that a system can engender against itself. This is the Lubarski-Pismenni Case. This man, a Privy Councillor and noted capitalist, was Vice-President of a Banking Syndicate at Kharkoff, which found itself in 1900, at the height of the industrial crisis, in a very difficult situation. The Syndicate demanded authorisation to raise an emergency loan. Upon the refusal of Witte, based on the malicious reports sent by his local representative, a stipendiary of the Riabuchinski, the President of the Syndicate committed suicide. The shares fell from 300 per cent. in a week, and the Riabuchinski, bankers of doubtful reputation at Moscow, bought them up at a low price in order to retain the commanding interest. They called an extraordinary general meeting at which, in order to secure the majority, they made thirty of their *employés* figure fraudulently as shareholders, a crime which by Russian law should have invalidated the whole proceeding. This bogus meeting elected the Riabuchinski to the Council of Administration, and indicted Lubarski and the other retiring members for fraudulent bankruptcy, whereas they had not even failed! An odious tragedy was forthwith enacted!

In order to eliminate Lubarski and his friends from the Syndicate, their conviction was absolutely necessary; this, *inter alia*, entailed the repayment by the culprits of the entire loss, £240,000, although when the panic was over, the Funds of the Syndicate, which chiefly handled mortgaged property, were found to recover their former value. Conviction was, however, absolutely impossible, on any show of justice. The Riabuchinski then disbursed £30,000 in order to elicit a

formal pledge from the Minister Muravieff that conviction should be given. The Minister steered his Magistrates accordingly. Lubarski was arrested, and kept in secret durance for ten months; no document relating to the charge was shown him; he was entirely ignorant of the nature of the precise accusation hanging over him. The trial before the Assizes was fixed for April, 1902. The defendants were beginning to prepare their case, when, after eight days' sitting, the Minister ordered an immediate hearing. The defence, without documents or possibility of preparation, was strangled. The Minister despatched a Special Agent, Chtcheglovitoff, with special orders for the conduct of the trial; the jury consisted partly of absolutely illiterate individuals, in a matter in which everything turned on the solvency of a House of Credit of the first rank! The Court recognised the fact of the illegality of the bogus meeting, but added that special reasons (the Order of the Minister) obliged them to pass this over. The suborning of the witnesses employed by the Riabuchinskis was proved; the refusal of the Court to obtain the fundamental documents for the defence from various administrations was proved; the evidence of Witte, Minister of Finance, was withheld. It was proved that the jury was suborned by scandalous indemnities, and that it deliberated under the eye of Chtcheglovitoff.

Lubarski and five other innocent victims were condemned to prison, and their total fortunes, £800,000, were sequestrated in order to guarantee that the loss of £240,000 would be covered; by this measure they were prevented from taking part in the affairs of the Syndicate, which was handed over to Muscovite swindlers. The unfortunate victims appealed to the Supreme Court. The Tsar, alarmed by a report from Witte, ordered that

the criminals should previously be set at liberty. Muravieff was fully conscious of the crime committed.

As for the rewards distributed by the happy Minister to his servile officials, they can be read in the following list, which includes all the Magistrates who took part in the Trial, with the nice preferments they obtained soon after:

1. Davidoff, Public Prosecutor at Kharkoff, appointed First President of the Court of Appeal at Odessa.

2. Sokalski, Junior Public Prosecutor, appointed Prosecutor at Novocherkassk. (Author of the fraudulent act of accusation.)

3. Dublanski, Junior Prosecutor, gratified by the Order of Stanislas of the First Class, and ennobled.

4. Deliaroff, Public Prosecutor, appointed Councillor to the Court of Appeal of S. Petersburg. (Sanctioned the illegal accusation of the prisoners.)

5. Snopko, Junior Prosecutor, appointed President of the Court of Simferopol.

6. Laiming, Justice of the Peace, rewarded by a decoration, and ennobled. (He had arbitrarily arrested the prisoners.)

7. Yuchneffski, Special Magistrate for important affairs, attached to the Court of Moscow, appointed Junior Public Prosecutor at Kharkoff. (Conducted the preliminary investigation by special order of the Minister Muravieff, after conducting the great Mantoff peculation case to the satisfaction of the Minister, that is, so as virtually to acquit the milliardaire Mamantoff, who was indicted for having embezzled enormous sums for the construction of a railway, which he never built.)

8. Podgurski, Examiner, assistant to the preceding, appointed Magistrate.

9. Ananieffski, Imperial Councillor at the Kharkoff

Court, promoted to a similar post, but with better remuneration, at Moscow.

10. Krifftsoff, Vice-President of the Kharkoff Court, appointed President of the Novochertrassk Court.

11. Hubert, Councillor at the Kharkoff Court, appointed President of the Vitebsk Court, ennobled and decorated with a valuable order. (Was reporter of the case for the Kharkoff Court.)

12. Krestianoff, Councillor of the Kharkoff Court, appointed Privy Councillor to the Tsar, for "special services." (Presided over the hearing of the case.)

13. Cherniaffski, First President of the Kharkoff Court, appointed Senator for the Supreme Department (where the case was brought after Appeal).

14. Pushkin, First Honorary President of the Kharkoff Court, appointed Senator in Supreme Department.

15. Chtcheglovitoff ("special agent to the Minister, delegated for management and direction of the Trial"), appointed Public Prosecutor to the Senate governing the Department of the Court of Appeal.

The bare sight of this list discovers unsuspected horizons in what Muravieff has made of Russian justice. Yet even this was not all. Chtcheglovitoff, appointed Public Prosecutor to the Court of Appeal, concluded by the mouth of his Deputy to reject the appeal in this case, which he had himself conducted at the Kharkoff Assizes. The appeal was quashed. The Tsar grew more and more alarmed, but instead of ridding the country of the scamp Muravieff and his accomplices, he only interdicted the execution of the penalties pronounced, at the same time giving the innocent victims a fresh chance by an accessory and supplementary trial, which might still come to an Appeal.

The peculators held their ground. Muravieff sent his Private Secretary to the fresh hearing, who proclaimed aloud that "the most obvious reasons dictated the necessary overthrow of the Appeal." He had further, under pretext of attempt at escape, put the unhappy Lubarski, broken, blind, and suffering from cardiac trouble in consequence of his moral and physical sufferings, under domiciliary arrest. With the accused muzzled; the Minister threatening; the Court terrorised and partly subsidised beforehand, the result was certain —a fresh condemnation. The Tsar, the Autocrat who was alone responsible for the official executive, could only weep! In order to discredit the omnipotent scoundrel, it was necessary to resort to public contempt. His colleagues refused to shake hands with him. At the Imperial Council, forty Councillors addressed him, smiling, one after the other, "What are they saying today, sir, about the Barantsevitch and Lubarski Cases?" He became "fatigued," and the trembling Tsar offered him the Embassy at Rome. . . . The Moral Crisis may not be a political crisis! But the Lubarski Case showed that it has at least a serious economic side.

The General Corruption.

The arbitrary executive of the Bureaucracy sanctioned by the law does not serve political aims or ambitions alone. In the first place, and above all, it has to provide adequate revenues for the Bureaucrats, drawn from public or private coffers. Corruption *de haut en bas* is its chief preoccupation. In gauging the extent of this sport, it is apparent that the moral crisis is seriously complicated by an economic crisis, for the funds that are annually embezzled figure into hundreds of millions.

It is more especially in the Army, Navy, and Public Works that corruption has its stronghold, firstly on account of the enormous sums employed by these administrations, secondly because, in the eyes of simple citizens, a blind faith in professional honesty attaches readily enough to the title General or Admiral. The encouragement to corruption provided by the tacit consent of the Tsar and the practices of the Grand Dukes is the less an excuse since these are the Autocrats whose will is law, whereas the others are but well-salaried valets.

The amplitude of the Bureaucratic prevarications is worthy of notice, since these, even more than those of the Grand Dukes, have become a powerful lever of the popular discontent. The expansion in Asia has given them an admirable lift. We have seen that Bezobrazoff and Alexeieff drained 850 millions for the organisation of Manchuria, which have gone—no one knows where. The engineers have played their part. On Lake Baïkal, for instance, special and very costly wharves have been constructed in places where the spring gales destroy them annually. They are reconstructed year by year as lightly as possible, while expending the credit given for a permanent construction; hence there is a profit of £120,000 per annum for the engineers. At Dalny, the famous "ice-free" port alongside Port Arthur, which now belongs to Japan, the engineers desired to set up an immense breakwater, for protection against the high waves, at a cost of nearly £2,000,000. £800,000 were spent, the remainder disappeared when the work was broken off—a decision arrived at when it was discovered that the breakwater did indeed check the force of the waves, but equally gave facility to the cold to congeal the becalmed water. Accordingly, the Port for which

the whole of Manchuria had been annexed, and which is now frozen up for six months of the year, was destroyed with embezzlement of over a million. Another instance:

The *Vostotchnoie Obozrienie* of Irkutsk published the following description of the state of the famous Circum-Baïkal Railway inaugurated with so much *réclame* on September 17, 1904:—"The first trains left the station of Kultusk on September 17. It took them three days to traverse the seventy miles of the line. Tunnel No. 10 is an absolute barrier to the circulation of passenger traffic. A mistake was made over the height of this tunnel, and the carriages cannot pass through it. A pioneer train attempted to get through, but all the funnels and ventilators were torn off. The same train left the lines ten times. The line cost one and a half million pounds, to which as much again must be added, 'for the acceleration of its construction.' Result: the line remains absolutely useless, and during the winter months the lake will be crossed as before, by sledges drawn over the ice by horses. The Government has lately acquired a thousand horses for this purpose."

Commentary would but weaken this interesting piece of information. It will only astonish those who are ignorant of the manner in which all the Trans-Baïkal and Trans-Manchurian lines have been constructed. Russia did still better after 1900. At that time the engineers, in order to hide their prevarications, caused the most compromising parts of the line to be destroyed by Chung Chuses, whose co-operation can always be secured for a few roubles, but they subsequently learned how to brag of their address. Their Grand Chief, Prince Khilkoff, blandished them in person, and congratulated himself complacently on their great technical capability.

As he directed the work himself, we may be sure that he would not have been so cruel as to send a Commission of Inquiry to the Trans-Baïkal, as happened in 1900.

The Army of Thieves and Traitors.

In the Military and Naval Departments these crimes are even more reprehensible, because they are so easily complicated by acts of real treason, especially in time of war. They are now reported from all sides in an alarming degree. The mere management of the Commissariat enabled the Generalissimo Kuropatkin to amass a personal fortune of over 6 million roubles by January, 1905, as is shown by his catalogue of depôts and appointments. At the same time he addressed a despairing despatch to the Tsar on December 26, 1904, pointing out the destitution of his troops, the total lack, after four months of winter, of warm clothing, the scandalous inferiority in quantity and quality of victuals, and the disastrous slowness of the transports. This despatch ends with the words:—

"As long as the Commissariat is not thoroughly reorganised from end to end, I shall remain fatally immobilised, and I shall be incapacitated for receiving new reinforcements, which, as they cannot be provisioned, would only be a dead weight."

The Generals and Officers on campaign have levied enormous percentages on the subsidies confided to them. The fund for the mobilisation of the districts of Minsk and Mohileff has been entirely looted: elsewhere the same has occurred in great measure, so that the reservists, who were called out and are dying of starvation, have revolted everywhere, and gone over to the ranks of the revolutionaries. The Governors and

Presidents of the Red Cross Societies have embezzled millions. General Sukhomlinoff, the Governor-General of Kieff, alone has (as was proved by an official inquiry) laid hands on £24,000, by falsifying his accounts, and diverting the capital to his private balance. Alexandrovski, Administrator-General of the Red Cross, a very intimate friend of the Empress-Dowager, who is already famed for having, in 1898, embezzled the funds that were intended to relieve the famine in the south of the country, has enriched himself in a scandalous fashion. And what can be said for the Navy?

There, not only is 10 per cent. levied as everywhere, on all the commands, but these are even impeded in order to get more plunder. When the question came up of buying the Argentine cruisers, whose presence might have reversed the whole course of events, all serious offers were quashed by Admiral Rojdestvenski and Staff-major Virenius, because they were determined only to negotiate with an American firm which had promised them enormous commissions upon this affair of £3,000,000. They even offered £8,000 to the rest to withdraw from the competition. The other competitors refused, but from that time they were confronted with absolute inertia: Russia did not receive the ships, and she lost the war! The famous coal depôts at Chemulpo, the protection of which, at the beginning of the war, cost Russia the *Varyag* and the *Koreets*, and which cost 8,000,000 roubles, never existed. Admiral Virenius set off with his Squadron, in January, 1904, without guns, since his securities had been stolen, and his artillery was sent to Vladivostok, where it never arrived. All the arsenals were empty. The scandal was so great that Admiral Avellane, the Ministry's representative, was forced, in order to put them on the wrong scent, to

punish, not the abominable swindlers of the capital, but the officials at Odessa, who had never received the securities destined for the arsenals and coal-depôts of their city!

The mysterious affair of the treason of Colonel Grimm is an admirable instance of the prevailing situation. This officer had sold all the plans of the Polish fortresses, the plans of general mobilisation, and even the secrets of the French Staff communicated to the Russian Minister of War, to Germany and Austria. The sums acquired in this fashion amounted to over £200,000. Grimm was unlucky at the moment of his arrest. At the trial, instituted after a too-zealous police-officer had discovered the crime by means of a letter addressed to a lady at Nice, Grimm declared aloud: "I am guilty, but three-quarters of you deserve to be at my side on this bench." He attested the complicity of several Commandants of fortresses, of Governor-General Chertkoff, of Staff-Major-General Pusyrevski, of General Herchelmann, and of a number of superior officers. At the close of the proceedings he expressed himself as follows: "If you want the Russian Army to be fit for war, you must throw all the Generals into prison without exception." The effect upon the Tsar was crushing. Matters were arranged with the scapegoat; he agreed to swear, as an afterthought, that the documents sold to him were false. He was, therefore, only condemned to a few years' imprisonment, and the Tsar was comforted. The war has none the less proved that Grimm was right. In the month of June, 1904, one of the highest personages in Europe assured the author that of £320,000 which the war was then costing daily, a fifth part must be reckoned as lost in the pockets of the officials.

The war has had the merit of exposing this moral

depravity before the eyes of the whole nation. This corruption, from being a moral, has, in virtue of its very exaggeration, become an economic fact. It is perfectly true that the economic crisis has been produced independent of corruption; but this last factor has convinced the people that its material misery is also in great measure attributable to the established political administration. The nation has thus been brought to seek an issue of its economic distress in the political reforms that can alone, by Parliamentary control, save if only the fifth part of the budget that is annually misappropriated by its Governors.

The Social Crisis.

The annihilation of the law for the benefit of the Bureaucracy, along with Great Russian oppression, which have crushed out all liberty of thought, of faith, or of action, and eventually the growing misery contingent on the economic megalomania of Witte's *régime*, have resulted by the sum total of their effect upon the mind of the people in a profound upheaval of the social structure.

The amorphous mass of the Tsar's subjects differentiated itself in proportion as the consciousness of the causes whence came its misfortunes penetrated the more instructed classes of the mob. And each new element of the population as it became conscious immediately entered into an opposition of growing fierceness against the Administration.

Naturally, the liberal professions, the university classes, the amateurs of the civilised countries were the first enemies of Tsardom. They were so in a literary way, theoretically, even more than from exasperation. It is among these, and these alone, that "nihilism," and later

on terrorism, have been cultivated. It is these also who have been the missionaries to the crowds who have remained unconscious, and who have, in last resort, opened the eyes of the people.

Their ranks were swelled by the commercial middle-classes. Timid here as everywhere, these rallied to the opposition, not from theory, but in defence of their material and moral interests, which were seriously compromised by the bureaucratic executive. Their passions were for the rest as moderate as their demands, because they realised little by little the probability of a new fight, to be sustained against their own economic victims, a social fight, the prospect of which made them desirous for strong Government authorities. The *bourgeoisie* indeed became constitutionalists, but undoubtedly with the secret hope of substituting the *régime* (less reprehensible, but equally hard on the lower classes) of capitalist "progressivism," for bureaucratic arbitrament. It even allied itself temporarily with Tsardom, in order not to compromise its entry into power, cried up a patriotism of a kind profitable to "business," and only allied itself definitively with the other revolted classes when it perceived that the Autocracy treated it no better than the socialists, terrorists, and peasants.

These two elements, the intellectuals and the capitalists, were condemned to impotence so long as they remained without support from below. Generally speaking, the subjugated mob of the peoples are only made aware of their moral and material situation in proportion with the increase of the proletariat, which on its side is invariably accompanied by ardent intellectual emulation. Witte's system assisted powerfully in this development. The first inauguration of factories and highways of communication provoked an exodus of

famished peasants towards the industrial centres. This new artisan class was, in fact, in a situation analogous with that of the artisans of civilised countries, with this difference, that their salaries (at a maximum of about half-a-crown for the most skilled) were infinitely lower, and their material conditions infinitely worse (under-feeding, working-day varying from twelve to eighteen hours, absence of all hygienic conditions in the factories, common habitations with an average of four tenants to each room [including their families], epidemics, police annoyances, especially in the matter of passports). This misery might not have counterbalanced the long experience by which the western artisans have profited in organising their industrial proletariat. It was, however, represented by certain ancient and essentially Russian institutions. On the one hand, the *mir*, or communal proprietorship in the villages of Great Russia, whose function will be explained below, had bequeathed to those who were forsaking it a sense of association ; on the other, the *artele*, or co-operative society of artisans, which had existed for centuries, had not only endowed the working-men with a very real talent for association, but had further evoked among the masses of the industrial proletariat the infinitely more important idea of co-operation, which could be transferred to industries on a large scale ; in other words, Socialism. It was only necessary to apply the fundamental idea of the *artele* and the *mir* to industrial conditions in order to bring the proletariat to conceptions practically analogous with Marxism. The political idea to which the latter tended was alone lacking. It was grafted on to the existing attitude of mind by the Intellectuals, the same anti-tsarist class that had given birth to Nihilism. The work took all the longer

inasmuch as the artisans still belonged in reality to the peasant caste, illiterate, brutalised by a body of clergy who represented Tsardom as the Visible Form of Divine Authority. But the more and more obvious misdeeds of the Administration facilitated the task. And so Marxian Socialism, with its political aims, issued from the Patriarchal Socialism of the Uncivilised Slavs. All that was left for the latter to do was to become self-conscious and to organise itself.

It was about 1893 (era of Witte) that the first artisan organisation was constituted at St. Petersburg under the name of "Defensive League for the Emancipation of the Working Classes." Like similar associations founded since 1891 in other countries, it was not intended to be very numerous, for the more members there were the greater was the risk of treason. At first, in its earliest days, the Association included 150–200 members, all active agitators. They made a vigorous propaganda among the artisans of the Capital in order to obtain subscriptions. Their annual budget amounted to the sum of 20,000 roubles, and from the outset they won the sympathies of a considerable number of workmen. The students and other outsiders interested themselves in the Association, and aided it by collections. This had to be done with the utmost circumspection, since the Government exercised strict surveillance upon all the actions of the students who were reported Intellectuals, and, therefore, revolutionaries. Balls and other *fêtes* were organised in order to make these collections, but were attended with a thousand difficulties. The police devoted particular attention to the accounts of the funds received at the students' balls; it was even difficult to dispose of the money. The funds were often claimed on pretext of aiding some poor artist, a family

in misfortune, or a student who was dying of phthisis. Many society women, whose ideas were liberal, subscribed to one or other of these objects, knowing perfectly well what the money was destined for. Branches of the Union were established at Moscow, Kieff, Ekaterinoslaff, and two or three other towns. But the relations between the different branches were ill-consolidated; the principal source of weakness in the Russian Artisan Associations became apparent—the immense distances, the lack and insecurity of communication, as well as the subtle system of police espionage, constituted enormous difficulties to the intra-relationship of the groups in the different cities.

The object of this Union was to ameliorate the material conditions of the artisans, to obtain higher salaries, shorter working-days, and better lodging. Politics were very little discussed. In 1896–7 the Union organised the first strike at St. Petersburg, in which thirty thousand men took part. This strike succeeded to a certain degree, since different Labour Laws were subsequently promulgated, which the Government saw itself compelled to grant for fear the artisans would launch into political reclamations. This attested the power of the Workmen's Union, and it gained an incessantly increasing number of members and partisans. A year later, there was no workman in certain industries who did not read, or listen to the reading of, the publications of the Union. A journal was founded with the title, *The Industrial Idea*, written entirely by working-men, with the object of developing "social relations" and solidarity among the workers. It attained a great popularity, although the unlettered state of the great majority of the proletariat was a serious obstacle to propaganda by means of pamphlets, the Press, or leaflets. In 1898 the "Russian

Social Democratic Party" was formed: from the outset it showed a more general and active energy than the old "Defensive League." For some time the two organisations were carried on side by side, but three years later all sections of the Union were incorporated in the Social Democrat Party, as subordinate Committees. Committees were also instituted in other towns, but even where they did not exist, there were at any rate propagandising agents.

During this time, the persecution of the Jews had evoked the creation of another secret society, the *Bund*, the object of which was to organise the Jewish artisans, and which flourished more particularly on the frontier zones, where it addressed itself with great success to the contraband introduction and distribution of revolutionary literature, destined for all the Russian Organisations. The excess of fiscal bureaucratic oppression gradually transformed the Social Democrats into a political party, although the Marxian theory, which derives all progress from industrial development, still falsified the views of its chief to such a degree that the group entirely lost touch with the condition of the peasants, and was in violent opposition to the action of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. After 1900, however, the trend of political events showed too plainly the uselessness of this "scientific" attitude. The party discovered that its social requisitions would remain sterile for an indefinite period, without political action against Tsardom, and it realised that the introduction of a more liberal form of government was the necessary prelude to its true propaganda.

And thus the Slav, Polish, Jewish Proletariat, as Marxians, suddenly embraced the political tendencies already advocated by the *bourgeoisie*, by a portion of the

decadent aristocracy, and still more by the revolutionary intellectuals. While, up to this time, these last social groups had had a monopoly of political action, the entire industrial proletariat henceforward participated in it. The revolutionary intellectuals, vestiges, or new strata raised upon the vestiges, of the older nihilism and of the group which directed the *Norodnaia Volya* (Will of the People), had on their side been working on the basis of political revolution. Under the name of "revolutionary socialism" they had constituted an occult party which was extremely powerful, less from its numbers than from the intellectual and moral qualities of its adherents. The directly active group of this party is frankly terrorist; while awaiting the social and political revolution that can only be accomplished by the mob whose education is being carried on by an admirably organised propaganda, this group, the mysterious *Boyevaya Organisatsia*, has prepared the downfall of Tsardom by the violent elimination of the individuals who played the damaging part of Directors under the Bureaucratic *régime*. All the sensational outrages committed since 1900 have been its work; and while Wahl and Obolenski have escaped death by the clumsiness of their assailants, the murderers of Bogoliepoff, Sipiaguine, Bogdanovitch, Plehve, and Serge have had an enormous influence upon the development of the crisis. This Party has really assumed the guidance of the Movement in proportion as all have realised that violence alone can cope with the violence of the Bureaucracy. And since the direction of the group is safe from treason—inasmuch as no member knows more than two or three others—the continuity of its action is better guaranteed than that of any other party. Its principal work, however, and that which determined

the ultimate revolutionary movement, is that of having awakened the social consciousness of the peasant, who, by his ignorance, his apathy, and his superstition, is the supreme rampart of Tsardom. It is revolutionary Socialism that has sought to plant the political claims of the people upon the only solid basis: the will of the peasants. And it is in consequence of its indefatigable and dangerous activity that the "peasant question," the primordial question, the question of the existence of nine-tenths of the nation, of one hundred and ten million individuals, has become the supreme political problem.

THE PEASANTS.

We have seen the insupportable economic conditions which the Plehvian Oligarchy and Witte's *régime* imposed upon the peasants. Witte himself, at the close of his career, after all his reforms in the inverse direction, has laboured with amazing energy to enter the natural path, to ameliorate the economic conditions of peasant life, and to base the future politics of the Empire upon the material and moral elevation of this class. Since 1901 innumerable inquiries have been held with a view to these reforms—reforms that were stillborn, as may well be imagined, seeing that their execution could only have tended to make the peasants conscious of the situation, and to upset the Bureaucratic *régime*. These Government inquiries have proved that in addition to poverty, two other non-political causes have mainly contributed to the downfall of the peasants: administrative organisation and ignorance.

The defects of the peasant administration can be summed up in two words: *zemstvo* and *mir*.

The *zemstvos*, elective organs of local administration,

correspond in principle with the General Councils and Divisional Councils of France. Introduced by Alexander II. after the abolition of serfdom, they were doubtless destined to take on the administrative work that had been performed till then by the nobles: elementary instruction, affairs of local interest, sanitary department, and similar objects, in view of which they voted special communal contributions. Their activity was, however, vitiated from the outset by several restrictions. In the first place, their decisions were subject to the veto of the Government. Next, Great Russian Nationalism had excluded the major portion of Europe from participation in reform: thirty-four departments alone profited, while everywhere else, in the north, west, south-west, and east, it was still the officials alone who were concerned with the local administration. Lastly, these Assemblies, divisional zemstvos and departmental zemstvos, elected generally for three years, included three classes of members, excluding the participation of all individuals who are not landed proprietors. The first of these classes, that of the large proprietors, the most numerous, is represented by the Nobles, whose heads of families are members by right. The second included the delegates of the *bourgeois* proprietors in the towns. The third consists of the delegates of the peasant communes, who are elected indirectly; the communes, in effect, elect delegates by universal suffrage, which is too often falsified by pressure, to the councils of the "enlarged communes," or *volosti*, which represent a fixed extent of occupied territory. It is these councils of *volosti* which elect the members of the zemstvos. These organisations, which have long been swayed exclusively by local interests, have always been the irreconcilable enemies of the

Bureaucracy. This party saw an obstacle to its arbitrary executive in their action, the more so as the elementary instruction and hygiene which the zemstvos are charged to administer might transform the peasants into self-conscious citizens. Accordingly, when the Plehvian Oligarchy reached its apogee, it transformed the laws of Alexander II. so as to reduce the zemstvos to simple registration offices. Under pretext of democratic decentralisation it controlled their deliberations by prefects instead of ministers, and its communal delegates, attached to the police, the *zemskie natchalniki*, took the local administration in hand on bureaucratic principles, uniting police brutality with peculation. They summarily fixed expenses according to the local budgets for the benefit of those who tendered the largest commissions; they directed the economic "amelioration," the sanitary arrangements, and instruction in such a fashion as to destroy all material or intellectual development. They dismissed the doctors, who were appointed and paid by the zemstvos, for "having, on pretext of hygiene, organised schools on subversive principles.' Schoolmasters, who "taught history and other dangerous subjects to the children" were dismissed, and in numerous instances replaced by popes who could neither read nor write. In a word "local administration" became merely a *régime* of police and of corruption. Thus the reforms of Alexander II. were annulled; the people, that portion of the people which enjoyed the institution of zemstvos, saw itself anew deprived of all means of raising the level of its intellectual and moral existence by its own efforts. The struggle between the Zemstvos and the Bureaucracy assumed a more and more serious aspect. The Assemblies, which had remained docile and confined themselves to economic requirements, were

led to criticise the general political conditions that hampered their activity. Some went on strike, abandoning the departments to the profoundest decay, which again favoured the germination of a revolutionary spirit; others protested violently, and were dissolved, dispersed by the police in a series of minor *coups d'état.* All claimed the liberty that had been "guaranteed" them. All ended by perceiving that the sole serious guarantee would be the substitution of a constitutional *régime* for the Bureaucracy.

And while the entire population was thus suffering from the arrest of all material amelioration, the peasants, more particularly, continued, in the greater part of Russia, to crouch under the yoke of the *mir,* that ancient institution of landed collectivism, admirable in theory, but which has conduced more than aught besides to bring the mujik to apathy, misery, and moral ruin. The problem of the *mir* is, fundamentally, the whole of the peasant problem in Great Russia. Its functions and curious mechanism merit a brief description. The modern *mir* is by no means the community of goods with which we are familiar among savages. It owes its origin to the abolition of serfdom. The result of this latter institution had been to group the peasants in agglomerations, in distinct communes. It was to these communities that the proprietorship of the lands that had formerly been held by the nobles was handed over. At the same time, collective responsibility was instituted. Yet this collectivism of landed property and landed responsibility have never produced the good results that were expected from them. They have remained in the state of abstract notions. The land is, indeed, distributed, usually for three years, by a general assembly of the heads of families and all are collectively

responsible for the payment of taxes, as also for the communal enterprises. But whither have these principles brought the people?

The interest of the commune, the *mir*, has never been the mainspring of the activity of its members. Even the duties legally imposed by the law, relief of old people, sick, wounded, &c., are not fulfilled by the commune. As a matter of fact, each person is left to his fate; the commune in practice comes to no one's aid. It leaves the unfortunates and incapables to perish. And the division of lands, in itself, only results in putting them all in conditions in which it is almost impossible for them to improve their position. No one can tell if he will be working on the same portion of the land next year, so that he has no interest in improving it; he exploits it, uses it, depreciates it. And the same peasant often has several parcels of land that are too minute to be profitable, and may besides be miles apart from each other. Disgusted as he may be with his fruitless toil, he has no chance of earning a better fate. He is attached to the glebe, the property of the commune. He cannot burst the bonds that attach him to it. In the eyes of the Law he always remains, So-and-so, the member of a given commune. He may quit it, emigrate, turn artisan, vagabond, or criminal for a certain period. But for that he must have the authorisation of the *mir*, the General Assembly, which furnishes him with the authorisation of the police authorities, with the indispensable passport. He then gives the policeman a tip, promises to send the *mir* a portion of his earnings, and goes off to work in the factories. He earns 2s. 6d. a day; his *mir* becomes aware of this, and commands him to send home 30s. a month on pain of withdrawal of his passport! He obeys, but he falls into a state of

misery, grows sick of working for others, and returns to the commune. But he has by now unlearned the trade of labourer; agricultural work no longer gives him any satisfaction. In the first place, there are too many hands. He becomes a ne'er-do-well, a burden, for, as is stated in a confidential report, "the villages are encumbered with young people who, finding no opportunity of working, or having become inept for agricultural labour, are absolutely condemned to idleness, and swell the agricultural proletariat." Or perhaps the emigrant is stiff-necked and refuses to pay. His commune withdraws his passport. The police send him back to his own country, and the result is the same. Or again, the peasant remains. Even in districts where there are not too many hands, he gives himself up to idleness, indifference, and routine, because under the fiscal conditions stated above his work does not better him in any way. He passes eight months out of twelve lying on his stove, so as to spend nothing. The work is nowhere done as it should be. Everyone plots the ruin of his neighbour in order to get possession of his parcel of land. The least miserable become *koulaki*, agricultural usurers, and drain the others till they quit their lands for the benefit of these vampires, this land for which they have repaid both capital and interest during forty years.

Collective responsibility has been even more disastrous. In the hands of the oligarchy of the most favoured, it has become a terrible weapon against the poor. Each knows that if his neighbour does not pay his part of the tax he will have to pay it for him. And therefore the *mir* is always inexorable. While the law specifies precisely what the private creditor can seize from the peasant, and what cannot be touched, "no law," says a confidential report, "intervenes in his

favour when it is the *mir* who performs the office of bailiff." To avoid paying for the paupers, the victims of accidents, improvidence, or a bad harvest (which sums up all the rest), the *mir* will seize goods, beasts, and crops, will even confiscate the land which it has parcelled out, and put it up to auction for the rent! The whole thing is sold for ridiculous prices, and the shareholder in rural collectivism is delivered over to starvation! The number of landless peasants is developing in a frightful degree, and the proletarisation of the country districts is growing, thanks to the very institution that was to check it.

The same disastrous result is seen for the "amelioration" of the communal services. In order not to pay, neither roads nor bridges are constructed, so that it is sometimes impossible to lead the harvests. In spring and autumn, the village streets are generally a swamp in which it is literally possible to drown oneself, while in summer the dust covers beasts and vehicles. The communal reservoirs serve as drinking troughs and are always empty if a fire breaks out. The villages too, burn down completely on the smallest provocation.

What can be said for the houses, and for their inhabitants who are thus periodically deprived of everything, since there is no insurance? Their huts, *izba*, contain a single room of which one quarter is occupied by the stove; along the wall there is a sleeping-bench, and that is all. They have a medium capacity of thirty-five cubic metres, with an average of six to eight inhabitants. Five cubic metres per person, while hygiene entails a minimum of twenty! Several kindred families are generally crammed into these hovels (without counting the fowls and lambs in winter), in unclean promiscuity and appalling dirt, with a stifling atmosphere, and no

possibility of ventilation! Flatted earth for floor, rough table for all domestic business and to eat off, a few nails for the onions and furs, the stinking sheep-skins, to hang from. The people sleep everywhere, mostly on the ground, the bench and the top of the stove being reserved for the old people. Men, women, children, young girls, young people, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, uncles, aunts, the whole boiling sleep there pell-mell; custom happily arranges that any child that is born is put down to his legal father. Rye bread is eaten—the heavier the better, because "you can feel it in your belly"—buckwheat, potatoes, cabbages, or bread made of birch bark, or nothing at all. Meat is not in favour; in the first place they do not get any, in the second, "you can't feel it in your belly." Infantile mortality exceeds fifty per cent. Water, *kvass*, or tea are drunk; the last, which is not common, is considered a sign of wealth. There is no regular consumption of brandy, but at the religious festivals it is consumed in such quantities as invariably upsets the balance of the budget.

Lastly, what of the cultivation of the lands? All that are far from the village are generally abandoned by their owners. The immense unappropriated communal lands are left virgin. The forests are devastated and disappear. New and necessary buildings are never erected at any distance from the village; no one wants them. The houses crowd each other out; there is little harvesting, and square leagues are left untilled a little way from the village.

This is the social *mir*. Now let us turn to the moral *mir*. This is a different matter, disastrous to Tsardom, comforting from the revolutionary point of view. To learn its characteristics, we could not do better than cite the confidential bureaucratic report above-mentioned,

taking, as a matter of course, the opposite point of view in appreciating the facts.

The moral influence exercised by the *mir* upon the population has been disastrous.

"The peasant had been accustomed from all time to be directed. At the moment in which a new situation was created for him by the abolition of serfdom, he was uneducated politically and socially. If the will of his masters had till then been his only rudder, in future he was to count upon himself alone, and this not only for the guidance of his own destinies, but for the direction, as a member of the *mir*, of the life of the entire community. The member of the Commune who was nothing yesterday, neither considered nor consulted by anyone, became to-day, in virtue of the new order, a personality, a real authority, intervening in his character of communal proprietor in the deliberations of the *mir*. Since routine prevents the senior members of the community from accustoming themselves to this new situation, they gradually desert the communal councils, where the young people who are more prone to modern notions eventually reign alone. Owing to this fact, the authority of age which has hitherto been one of the bases of the life of the peasant, is declining more and more, and dropping to zero. The old man no longer counts in the *mir*, nor in the family, which is losing all its patriarchal character. It is no longer the father who commands the son, it is the son who imposes his will on the father. And if it happens that the latter revolts, and tries to put his disobedient son back into his right place, the latter has recourse to the *mir*, which, to "avoid scandal," can find nothing better than division. And it follows of course invariably, that in these divisions it is the father who is duped.

"The church is only frequented now by old people: the young ones are occupied, they are attending to their business! The clergy is neither upheld nor esteemed. . . Filial affection, the respect due to age, faith, all have thus disappeared in the dissolving action of the commune. But the harm would not be irremediable if that were all; unfortunately there is yet more, and a far graver matter. What is much worse is the belief in the omnipotence of the *mir* which has been engendered in the peasant. For him, in fact, there is nothing beyond the *mir*, no one can do anything against it. . . . Now this sentiment is an incomparable nursery garden for socialist ideas. We are convinced that if ever Russia should suffer one of those catastrophes let loose by the uprising of the masses of the people, the movement, contrary to what has occurred in Western Europe, would here start from the country. . . . Just as the Commune has cherished the Proletariat in its bosom, so it will give birth to this other noxious product Socialism." . . .

The picture thus furnished by the Bureaucracy itself of the development of the peasant commune puts the last touches to our map of the social crisis. The double confession that the Russian peasant is the victim of the progressive proletarisation, as well as the ever more fervent disciple of modern conceptions, throws all the light that can be desired upon the pre-revolutionary attitude of nine-tenths of the population of the Empire. The crisis emphatically is not merely social but still more political. For the rest it had already become political, by a natural evolution, before the revolutionary Intellectuals had dared to carry their propaganda to the peasants. It is certain that political forms in general do not interest these totally ignorant masses: but what they detest is at

any rate the contemporaneous, Tsarist, bureaucratic form in politics. The peasants have become conscious, if we may venture to put it so, of what they no longer want; but they have not yet become aware of what they do want. And if in the majority of cases, orthodoxy and custom, conjoined with the impossibility of obtaining instruction, prevents them from conceiving of an Empire without a Tsar; they have on the other hand a clear conception of the iniquity of great landed property, of the immorality of the advantages accruing to the bureaucrats who are attached to the defence of the Government—they can finally conceive the Constitution, which is the essential matter:—an immense *mir*, a "district delegation" including the entire country;—in brief, National Autonomy.

THE INTELLECTUAL CRISIS.

And yet, intellectually speaking, they are not by any means ready to exercise this autonomy.

Such is the intellectual condition of the Tsar's subjects that even if "patriarchal autocracy," as represented by the bureaucratic Oligarchy, were able to introduce reforms which could sweep away the economic, political, and judicial crises without destroying itself; even if every man obtained absolute liberty of movement, the possibility of working freely for himself, and further, the judicial weapons which would render him capable of defending himself by personal initiative against the bureaucratic arbitrament, nothing would thereby be altered. For nine-tenths of the nation, more than 120 millions of Russian subjects, would be totally prevented from profiting by such advantages, ignorant, unlettered, unconscious of their indignity as they are—unconscious

of their new rights and privileges as they will long remain. On close inspection that is the point at which all bureaucratic reform must collapse; and that consequently is the point from which the Revolution springs.

This seeming contradiction is so in appearance only. The people are too ignorant to substitute, and above all to administer, a more modern *régime* in place of the existing system? But if bureaucratic reform is impossible without at the same time destroying the Bureaucracy, Russia must be hastening towards anarchy, and absolute barbarism! The argument is facile and imposing; it is the frequent excuse for Tsarism in the eyes of the civilised world, but it is fallacious. It overlooks the existence of a numerous intellectual *élite*, who are prevented, by lack of numbers alone, from possessing themselves of power. This want will be supplied by the still illiterate masses. They are not too ignorant to realise that an upheaval alone can deliver them from their misery, while their very intellectual incapacity for confronting the problems that will present themselves collectively after this upheaval will facilitate the Intellectual Oligarchy.

After the Revolution, in fact, it is this party only who will be capable of governing. And of this the Bureaucracy is so well aware that, in order to determine the chances there would be of sowing dissension between the illiterates and the intellectuals, it has taken pains, since 1899, to search out, with the greatest possible *minutiæ*, the state of the mind, or rather the want of mind, of the crowds. The results of the secret inquiry, which "convinced the Government of the inutility of giving more extensive rights to the people as against the Authorities," are literally overwhelming. They relate to 42 Departments—33 in European Russia, 5

in Poland, 2 in the Caucasus, and 2 in Siberia. The maximum percentage of persons capable of signing their names is at St. Petersburg, *i.e.*, a little more than half, 55 per cent.; the minimum at Kars (Armenia), 11 per cent. In six Governments the number of the illiterate amounts to two-thirds, in fifteen others to three-quarters, in five others again to four-fifths, and in the fourteen remaining to about nine-tenths of the population!

The women are far below this average. Only two-fifths of the feminine population of St. Petersburg can read even a little; the average for the provincial towns is about a sixteenth (Viatka, 7·5 per cent.; Smolensk, 7·1; Simbirsk, 7; Penza, 6·3), and in the country districts one woman in twenty-five is able, as a rule, to read her name!

The figures of the illiterate taken by social class are even more astounding; they refer solely to men. The most lettered caste—as in Ancient India—is the clergy; out of 100 priests there are only twenty-eight who can neither read nor write. The aristocracy is a little less learned: it plumes itself on thirty illiterates to each 100 gentlemen. The "middle class," comprising in this census all who do not belong either to the preceding classes, or to the peasant caste, *i.e.*, all the non-ennobled officials (the rank of "Councillor of State" is equivalent in the ladder of civil degrees formed after the military grades to that of General of Brigade, and confers nobility); then the "honorary burgesses," a sort of intermediate caste between the nobles and the simple *bourgeoisie*, and enjoying certain privileges; then the burghers of the towns, merchants, industrials, artisans, and industrial labourers not included in the list of the Great Russian *mirs*—this hybrid class reckons sixty

illiterates to 100 persons. In regard finally to the peasants, they break the record of all the civilised peoples of Europe, America, and Asia, with eighty-nine individuals indicted with analphabetism out of 100.

The picture is, if possible, even more appalling if we consider the number of persons of the two sexes who have received a "higher" education—taking the word in the Russian sense—that is, who have learned some notion of facts in addition to catechism and writing (calculation is performed by all classes of the population with the aid of an elementary machine). They have been counted in thirty-six Departments, the most advanced of the Empire. There, to a population of 58,819,125 souls, the number of "scholars" amounts to 690,361, that is, 1·1 per cent.! Imagine France with just 400,000 persons aware of the existence of Germany, and having heard the name of Napoleon, and you will have the intellectual standard of Russia! The Bureaucracy, well aware of the gravity of this situation for the life of the State, is none the less well content with it. This state of things is in fact its work, and it finds amusement, besides, in avowing its profound contempt for the illiterates. It has left them in a state bordering on that of the beasts, in order to treat them as such with impunity; and the most monstrous actions, such, for example, as the numerous cases in which whole villages have been seized by the Tax-Collector for non-payment of taxes, simply because there was no one to read the roll of contributions, are publicly discussed as evidence of the excellence of the existing *régime*. . . no other being possible for "such rabble." What really is astonishing is that a minority of Intellectuals has been able to constitute itself, despite the obstacles systematically raised to the development of instruction: primary education is illusory, secondary

instruction is monopolised for the benefit of the Administration, and is devised solely in order to turn out perfect bureaucrats according to the principles of Plehve and Serge.

Primary instruction is lacking in any central organisation; it makes not for instruction, but for subjection. The schools are only partly kept up by the Ministry of "Enlightenment of the People" (*Narodnoie Prosvechtchenie*) and of Public Instruction. A vast number of them are dependent on the Most Holy Synod, the directive organ of the Orthodox Church; others belong to the Ministry of Public Works, of War, of the Navy, of the Court, and, above all, of Finance. Finally, the best schools are departmental, founded and kept up by the *zemstvos*, but distorted and depreciated by bureaucratic interference in local affairs, in despite of the laws of Alexander II. Russia (close of 1901) has 84,544 primary schools; the teaching staff consists of 172,494 teachers; the number of pupils of both sexes amounts to 4,580,827. And the Empire has 130,000,000 inhabitants! Public Instruction only directs 40,000 of these schools, the Holy Synod, 42,000. But it is important to note the distrust felt by the people against these last, which have only 1,600,000 pupils, while those of the State contain 2,800,000. On an average, each ministerial school reckons 71 pupils, the parish school, 38 only. The schools deriving from other sources come between the two in this respect; the Church teaching has least of all.

The number of scholars is increasing by 375,000 per annum; the figure of the population is increasing by twenty times more! Nearly the whole of the primary schools have only a single class! The following official statistics are even more suggestive. Estimating the

territory of the Empire at 18,764,785 square versts (a verst equals 1,050 metres) and its population at 133,000,000 souls, the average works out at one school to 1,600 inhabitants and to each 225 square kilometres. But if we take only the schools with two or three classes, we find one to 5,100 square kilometres, *i.e.*, to 36,000 inhabitants. The departments in which the schools are most numerous are Moscow and Toula (one to 16 square kilometres), Podolia (one to 17), Varsovia and Kieff (one to 20). That of Petersburg has one to 24 square kilometres. The absolute impossibility of sending more than a small minority of the children to school, even in the most favoured countries, is obvious. And what shall be said of the less favoured districts? In that of Tourgaïsk, there is one school per 2,700 square kilometres; Samarcand, one to 2,900; Amour, one to 3,600; Ferghana, one to 6,500; Yenissei, one per 7,800; Transcaspia, one per 12,000; Yakoutsk, one per 50,000 square kilometres. As regards the sex of the pupils, the girls are at a frightful disadvantage; 1,200,000 only go to school against 3,300,000 boys. As to the social position of the pupils, 84 per cent. are the children of peasants, the rest belong to the urban population. The pupils at the most advanced schools (three classes) are, out of over 20,000,000 of children, just 173,538.

This revolting state of affairs is attributable solely to the costly whims of Tsardom, conjoined with a secret desire to limit popular education. This is proved by the expenditure upon primary instruction. Per year and per inhabitant the cost of primary instruction amounts to 3*s.* at Moscow and 2*s.* 8*d.* at St. Petersburg. The ministerial report whence these figures are extracted states triumphantly that money is not squandered everywhere in this reckless fashion. The

"least burdened" department of European Russia is Kovno in Lithuania, where only fourpence is expended per year per inhabitant. In Asia the economy is much greater; only twopence is expended at Semiretchensk, one penny at Samarcand, one halfpenny per year per head in the Ferghana. Further, in 31 departments, no school has any sort of library, even if only of three volumes! And the poverty of the peasants is not conducive to providing libraries.

Since, therefore, it is evident that the people cannot develop intellectually, it will readily be understood that the higher instruction provided against payment to the children of the wealthy classes can only abut in the mental subjection of slaves; it is strangled by the monopoly of the State. The history of this monopoly is the account of a tragic fight between intellectuality and State policy. Monopoly has become the strongest weapon of the existing *régime*. Instruction is organised in the intellectual department as the army is in the department of external life. Or, rather, education has spontaneously organised itself on the principle of "intellectual obedience" without any need of assistance from the State. Whatever, near or far, relates to instruction exists only by the State; it is the State that appoints professors, gives diplomas to the students, and enacts the wearing of uniforms for both; it is the State that favours those who serve it best in the world of letters, and who contribute to the perpetuation of the existing *régime*. Again, even if the State were absolutely impartial, which is a practical impossibility, the lower would unconsciously model itself upon the higher; the pupil would take as his ideal the mental attitude of those "have arrived" in the State, and the latter, without even resorting to a suicidal patronage of

tendencies hostile to itself in education, has the glory of seeing new generations adapting themselves more and more to the intellect that appears to guide them.

This is the ideal education, monopolised by the State, which reigned in Russia under Nicholas I. It should be noted that this monopoly can, in given cases, connote the suppression or restriction of education so soon as it comes within the interest of the State to limit the intellectual development of the crowd.

What has happened is even worse, if possible. There has been a struggle to combat the Western knowledge that was trickling in; everything has been "Russified"; those who resisted "Tsarian truth" have been persecuted as very criminals. An inquisition, a church, an intellectual dogma reigned, the denial of which involved the worst penalties. And still the stronger intellects wrestled on.

It is here that the intellectual tragedy that will endure to the end of Tsardom commences. Men were found who, after escaping from the mental prison house of State Education, devoted themselves to the propaganda of ideas abhorrent to monopoly. Accordingly, the monopoly of public schools had to be extended to private lessons! The generation of the first *revoltés* grew up, created a younger generation, and proposed to form its intelligence at home, on the model of the father and mother, rather than on that of the abstract being whom the State instructed, and alluded to as the "perfect citizen" or "perfect subject," because its perfection consists precisely in having no opinion, no voluntary movement other than what coincides absolutely with the *régime* that is in power. Those, however, who attempted to institute this system of family education found themselves torn from their

children, and thrown into prison for rebellion. And if matters were not always pushed so far the right was reserved of watching, spying, denouncing these guilty parents, representing them to their children as criminals, ripping up all family bonds, and converting the child into a hesitating, neuter being, who will no longer be dangerous, because he is no longer any good.

Here is a characteristic outcome of this domestic espionage: A father was giving his son lessons in Greek, and making him read the *Republic* of Plato. The porter, coming in by chance, heard the word "*politiké*." Convinced in his ignorance that politics were being discussed, and anarchical writings studied, he denounced his master. The Inspector of Education came to sift out this "clandestine school," and made the child appear before the Authorities, who. after extorting the confession that he had read the book in question, separated him from his father, and sent him to a State School, for which his father had to pay, with the further fine of two thousand roubles for "illegal exercise of scholastic functions."

The University revolts, which have never ceased, but exhibit an ever-growing span in proportion with the growth of the oppression, are only the external manifestation of this mental fight. The majority of young minds, even the best endowed, succumb fatally, if only from isolation. On the other hand, those who do resist are all the stronger: they are real intellectual heroes, even if from the Western point of view they do not shine as stars of first magnitude in the heaven of knowledge. Their chief claim to glory is the non-destruction of their individual mentality. This intellectual heroism readily entails political heroism. There is first the special temperament that produces the apostle, then the ener-

getic enthusiasm that coolly calculates the effect to be obtained, but sacrifices itself freely if this effect will be appreciable. It is these criminals liberated from the intellectual dock who have organised terrorism, and have spontaneously arrived at orientating the general blind revolt into the path of conscious reclamatory action.

The Bureaucracy has rendered their task a hard one. Not satisfied with letting the consciousness of the people sleep, it has drugged it with the most subtle and powerful narcotics. The most stupid religious superstitions have possessed the brains of the crowd for long generations; the most perverted and intentional falsehoods have been proposed as truths from Heaven, in the sole aim of preventing it from listening to those who were bringing knowledge and the means of happiness. A clever master-stroke! For in last resort the Bureaucracy allied to the Theocracy which is none other, according to orthodox dogma, than Tsardom, has been able to base its defensive policy against the popular assault, upon the ignorance of the very crowds who are seeking their enfranchisement. A dangerous game, but truly a trump card! The terrorised Tsar let be; he permitted his person to be associated with the Bureaucracy, the dogma of his Divinity to be flourished to crush the Revolution, to arouse the unlettered peasants against the prospect of their own betterment! If this dogma proved devoid of power, the Bureaucracy—and with it the Tsar himself—would fall, and the last pillar of their power, peasant superstition, would crumble with it. The test has been tried. In December, 1904, the Synod, by order of Pobiedonostseff and at the instigation of the Tsar, despatched an ultra-confidential circular to all the Bishops, which put the question definitely. The text is as follows:

"The Evil One is once again attacking the Holy Orthodox Church. An impious agitation has been stirred up against our Gracious Sovereign. Under the inspiration of the Evil One, all the powers of darkness have united to destroy the True Faith. They have dared approach the Sacred Person of the Head of the Church, our Sovereign Master. They openly desire Him to break the Most Holy Oath which He pronounced at His Accession to the Throne, in the Cathedral of the Assumption, as the Anointed of the Lord, and by which He vowed to defend the True Faith, and the principles by which His Ancestors have governed Holy Russia, from all attacks. The power of the Evil One is great, but the True Faith can crush it, and in these troubled times all true believers should join together to avert disaster from our Religion and our Empire. We therefore command all our Bishops to transmit the following order to every priest in their respective dioceses. Let them convene their flock in Church, and cause them to pray repeatedly to the Most-High, and to the Most-Holy-Mother-of-God, in order that they may confer on our Sovereign Master the strength of mind and firmness of spirit necessary to enable Him to resist the influence of the Evil One, to avoid perjury, and to continue to reign in accordance with the True Faith, and conformably to the will of His Ancestors."

This appeal *in extremis* had no consequence other than the derision of the peasants. They abstained from appearing at the prayer-meetings. Nay, more, they felt that tragic and grotesque appeal to be a confession of the wrong with which the Tsar had loaded his conscience, as also of the power he recognised them to possess. The peasant is above all profoundly superstitious, religious, fanatical, yet more a mystic. But this mysti-

cism, which made him see the Tsar more close to God than he was himself, did not admit the conception of a Tsar further from God than himself. If the Tsar feels that the mujik has to intervene on his behalf, it means that God has abandoned him, that he is not on the right path. This reasoning repeated a million times, will consummate the fall of Tsardom. This ignorance and religious superstition, by a just return of things, have sapped the last pillar of the Tsardom they were intended to prop up. God has condemned the *régime.* Henceforward the peasant will listen, not to the Tsar, but to his own common-sense; he claims the proprietorship of all the land; he rises in rebellion; he burns; he loots; he refuses to let himself be slain for the six millions engulfed at Yonghampo; he organises military strikes, political strikes, social strikes. And if he does not *make* the Revolution of which perhaps he still ignores the meaning, he lets it come about.

With this, the picture of the general conditions presiding at the inauguration of the Russian Revolution is complete: the Administration is breaking up—the whole people are in revolt.

The Revolution.

On the day when the Revolutionary Era in Russia opened with the murder of Plehve, the supreme incarnation of the Tsarian *régime,* the world assisted at the sudden materialisation of this picture in an impressionist epitome. Everything subsequent to this event has only been the detailed repetition, on a smaller scale, of this act, which was too absolute to be understood in its profound significance by the entire nation. Each individual, however, repeated it according to his strength and

to the place he filled. The fatal termination of the reign of blood and falsehood, the extra-national war, the war of looters, the war of peculators, the war of incapables, the war of fools, convinced the most vacillating by its moral lesson; Tsardom is breaking up in its corruption, the Nation is awakening.

The precise forms that will be assumed by this upheaval are secondary, notwithstanding their immense importance. Upon them, it is true, depends the number of victims here or there, and humanity bids us hope that the agony of Tsardom will be unaccompanied by disastrous convulsions. This hope, however, can scarcely be realised. The Russian Empire has become a chaos, where men and ideas ephemerally set and rise. This chaos is symbolised in the reiterated and monstrous contradictions of Nicholas II.; by his indecision; his manifest duplicity; his megalomania, which after the scattering of his fleets and armies, stickles for the notion of honour—the fool's honour, which immolates the rising generation of the country to economise a little money in this disgraceful affair!—the honour of this caricature of a Sovereign who ensconces himself trembling in his Castle, dares not show himself to his people, as yet pacific, and traitorously assassinates them in the streets! the honour of the sick man who brags in the morning that he will save his country, and saves it again at night by undoing what he has just done. The Bureaucracy to-day takes part with the Tsar, to-morrow, when menaced, compromises with the enemy; the bourgeois oscillating between childish timidity and virile wrath; the artisan going from icon to bomb, from bomb back again to icon; the peasant sacrificing to-day the terrorists, to-morrow the nobles; all these classes are at present involved in a tempest of infatuation which forbids any

prospect of consecutive action. But the initial phases of all revolutions have followed the same course.

One thing is certain—Tsardom will not recover from its decadence, for this is natural and fatal. By a more and more rapid, but absolutely logical development, it has evolved to disaster, at once internal and external. Just as the Bureaucracy has lost the two great symbols of its mundane power, Port Arthur and Mukden, in this sanguinary war, so in the moral war it has insolently launched against its clients it has lost the only two bases of a stable government: popular esteem and its own dignity. And these are the imponderable agents that dominate the world, and which never return to those who have not known how to keep them.

Whatever be the successive phases of this agony, they will develop by an inexorable internal filiation from the pre-revolutionary circumstances sketched in these pages; and in these circumstances they will find an explanation that will justify them before the tribunal of the human conscience.

THE END

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